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For full license information,\r\nsee the Uncopyright at the end of this\r\nebook.\n\nStandard Ebooks is a volunteer-driven project that produces ebook\r\neditions of public domain literature using modern typography,\r\ntechnology, and editorial standards, and distributes them free of cost.\r\nYou can download this and other ebooks carefully produced for true book\r\nlovers at standardebooks.org.\n\nPreface\n\nI fear that Mr.\xa0Sherlock Holmes may become like one of\r\nthose popular tenors who, having outlived their time, are still tempted\r\nto make repeated farewell bows to their indulgent audiences. This must\r\ncease and he must go the way of all flesh, material or imaginary. One\r\nlikes to think that there is some fantastic limbo for the children of\r\nimagination, some strange, impossible place where the beaux of Fielding\r\nmay still make love to the belles of Richardson, where Scott’s heroes\r\nstill may strut, Dickens’s delightful Cockneys still raise a laugh, and\r\nThackeray’s worldlings continue to carry on their reprehensible careers.\r\nPerhaps in some humble corner of such a Valhalla, Sherlock and his\r\nWatson may for a time find a place, while some more astute sleuth with\r\nsome even less astute comrade may fill the stage which they have\r\nvacated.\n\nI had fully determined at the conclusion of The Memoirs to\r\nbring Holmes to an end, as I felt that my literary energies should not\r\nbe directed too much into one channel. That pale, clear-cut face and\r\nloose-limbed figure were taking up an undue share of my imagination. I\r\ndid the deed, but fortunately no coroner had pronounced upon the\r\nremains, and so, after a long interval, it was not difficult for me to\r\nrespond to the flattering demand and to explain my rash act away. I have\r\nnever regretted it, for I have not in actual practice found that these\r\nlighter sketches have prevented me from exploring and finding my\r\nlimitations in such varied branches of literature as history, poetry,\r\nhistorical novels, psychic research, and the drama. Had Holmes never\r\nexisted I could not have done more, though he may perhaps have stood a\r\nlittle in the way of the recognition of my more serious literary\r\nwork.\n\nAnd so, reader, farewell to Sherlock Holmes! I thank you for your\r\npast constancy, and can but hope that some return has been made in the\r\nshape of that distraction from the worries of life and stimulating\r\nchange of thought which can only be found in the fairy kingdom of\r\nromance.\n\nArthur Conan Doyle.\n\nThe Adventure of the Illustrious Client\n\n“It can’t hurt now,” was Mr.\xa0Sherlock Holmes’s comment\r\nwhen, for the tenth time in as many years, I asked his leave to reveal\r\nthe following narrative. So it was that at last I obtained permission to\r\nput on record what was, in some ways, the supreme moment of my friend’s\r\ncareer.\n\nBoth Holmes and I had a weakness for the Turkish bath. It was over a\r\nsmoke in the pleasant lassitude of the drying-room that I have found him\r\nless reticent and more human than anywhere else. On the upper floor of\r\nthe Northumberland Avenue establishment there is an isolated corner\r\nwhere two couches lie side by side, and it was on these that we lay upon\r\nSeptember 3, 1902, the day when my narrative begins. I had asked him\r\nwhether anything was stirring, and for answer he had shot his long,\r\nthin, nervous arm out of the sheets which enveloped him and had drawn an\r\nenvelope from the inside pocket of the coat which hung beside him.\n\n“It may be some fussy, self-important fool; it may be a matter of\r\nlife or death,” said he as he handed me the note. “I know no more than\r\nthis message tells me.”\n\nIt was from the Carlton Club and dated the evening before. This is\r\nwhat I read:\n\nSir James Damery presents his compliments to\r\nMr.\xa0Sherlock Holmes and will call upon him at 4:30\r\ntomorrow. Sir James begs to say that the matter upon which he desires to\r\nconsult Mr.\xa0Holmes is very delicate and also very\r\nimportant. He trusts, therefore, that Mr.\xa0Holmes will make\r\nevery effort to grant this interview, and that he will confirm it over\r\nthe telephone to the Carlton Club.\n\n“I need not say that I have confirmed it, Watson,” said Holmes as I\r\nreturned the paper. “Do you know anything of this man Damery?”\n\n“Only that this name is a household word in society.”\n\n“Well, I can tell you a little more than that. He has rather a\r\nreputation for arranging delicate matters which are to be kept out of\r\nthe papers. You may remember his negotiations with Sir George Lewis over\r\nthe Hammerford Will case. He is a man of the world with a natural turn\r\nfor diplomacy. I am bound, therefore, to hope that it is not a false\r\nscent and that he has some real need for our assistance.”\n\n“Our?”\n\n“Well, if you will be so good, Watson.”\n\n“I shall be honoured.”\n\n“Then you have the hour\ufeff—4:30. Until then we can put the matter out of\r\nour heads.”\n\nI was living in my own rooms in Queen Anne Street at the time, but I\r\nwas round at Baker Street before the time named. Sharp to the half-hour,\r\nColonel Sir James Damery was announced. It is hardly necessary to\r\ndescribe him, for many will remember that large, bluff, honest\r\npersonality, that broad, clean-shaven face, and, above all, that\r\npleasant, mellow voice. Frankness shone from his gray Irish eyes, and\r\ngood humour played round his mobile, smiling lips. His lucent top-hat,\r\nhis dark frock-coat, indeed, every detail, from the pearl pin in the\r\nblack satin cravat to the lavender spats over the varnished shoes, spoke\r\nof the meticulous care in dress for which he was famous. The big,\r\nmasterful aristocrat dominated the little room.\n\n“Of course, I was prepared to find Dr.\xa0Watson,” he\r\nremarked with a courteous bow. “His collaboration may be very necessary,\r\nfor we are dealing on this occasion, Mr.\xa0Holmes, with a man\r\nto whom violence is familiar and who will, literally, stick at nothing.\r\nI should say that there is no more dangerous man in Europe.”\n\n“I have had several opponents to whom that flattering term has been\r\napplied,” said Holmes with a smile. “Don’t you smoke? Then you will\r\nexcuse me if I light my pipe. If your man is more dangerous than the\r\nlate Professor Moriarty, or than the living Colonel Sebastian Moran,\r\nthen he is indeed worth meeting. May I ask his name?”\n\n“Have you ever heard of Baron Gruner?”\n\n“You mean the Austrian murderer?”\n\nColonel Damery threw up his kid-gloved hands with a laugh. “There is\r\nno getting past you, Mr.\xa0Holmes! Wonderful! So you have\r\nalready sized him up as a murderer?”\n\n“It is my business to follow the details of Continental crime. Who\r\ncould possibly have read what happened at Prague and have any doubts as\r\nto the man’s guilt! It was a purely technical legal point and the\r\nsuspicious death of a witness that saved him! I am as sure that he\r\nkilled his wife when the so-called ‘accident’ happened in the Splugen\r\nPass as if I had seen him do it. I knew, also, that he had come to\r\nEngland and had a presentiment that sooner or later he would find me\r\nsome work to do. Well, what has Baron Gruner been up to? I presume it is\r\nnot this old tragedy which has come up again?”\n\n“No, it is more serious than that. To revenge crime is important, but\r\nto prevent it is more so. It is a terrible thing,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes, to see a dreadful event, an atrocious\r\nsituation, preparing itself before your eyes, to clearly understand\r\nwhither it will lead and yet to be utterly unable to avert it. Can a\r\nhuman being be placed in a more trying position?”\n\n“Perhaps not.”\n\n“Then you will sympathize with the client in whose interests I am\r\nacting.”\n\n“I did not understand that you were merely an intermediary. Who is\r\nthe principal?”\n\n“Mr.\xa0Holmes, I must beg you not to press that question.\r\nIt is important that I should be able to assure him that his honoured\r\nname has been in no way dragged into the matter. His motives are, to the\r\nlast degree, honourable and chivalrous, but he prefers to remain\r\nunknown. I need not say that your fees will be assured and that you will\r\nbe given a perfectly free hand. Surely the actual name of your client is\r\nimmaterial?”\n\n“I am sorry,” said Holmes. “I am accustomed to have mystery at one\r\nend of my cases, but to have it at both ends is too confusing. I fear,\r\nSir James, that I must decline to act.”\n\nOur visitor was greatly disturbed. His large, sensitive face was\r\ndarkened with emotion and disappointment.\n\n“You hardly realize the effect of your own action,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes,” said he. “You place me in a most serious\r\ndilemma for I am perfectly certain that you would be proud to take over\r\nthe case if I could give you the facts, and yet a promise forbids me\r\nfrom revealing them all. May I, at least, lay all that I can before\r\nyou?”\n\n“By all means, so long as it is understood that I commit myself to\r\nnothing.”\n\n“That is understood. In the first place, you have no doubt heard of\r\nGeneral de Merville?”\n\n“De Merville of Khyber fame? Yes, I have heard of him.”\n\n“He has a daughter, Violet de Merville, young, rich, beautiful,\r\naccomplished, a wonder-woman in every way. It is this daughter, this\r\nlovely, innocent girl, whom we are endeavouring to save from the\r\nclutches of a fiend.”\n\n“Baron Gruner has some hold over her, then?”\n\n“The strongest of all holds where a woman is concerned\ufeff—the hold of\r\nlove. The fellow is, as you may have heard, extraordinarily handsome,\r\nwith a most fascinating manner. a gentle voice and that air of romance\r\nand mystery which means so much to a woman. He is said to have the whole\r\nsex at his mercy and to have made ample use of the fact.”\n\n“But how came such a man to meet a lady of the standing of Miss\r\nViolet de Merville?”\n\n“It was on a Mediterranean yachting voyage. The company, though\r\nselect, paid their own passages. No doubt the promoters hardly realized\r\nthe Baron’s true character until it was too late. The villain attached\r\nhimself to the lady, and with such effect that he has completely and\r\nabsolutely won her heart. To say that she loves him hardly expresses it.\r\nShe dotes upon him, she is obsessed by him. Outside of him there is\r\nnothing on earth. She will not hear one word against him. Everything has\r\nbeen done to cure her of her madness, but in vain. To sum up, she\r\nproposes to marry him next month. As she is of age and has a will of\r\niron, it is hard to know how to prevent her.”\n\n“Does she know about the Austrian episode?”\n\n“The cunning devil has told her every unsavoury public scandal of his\r\npast life, but always in such a way as to make himself out to be an\r\ninnocent martyr. She absolutely accepts his version and will listen to\r\nno other.”\n\n“Dear me! But surely you have inadvertently let out the name of your\r\nclient? It is no doubt General de Merville.”\n\nOur visitor fidgeted in his chair.\n\n“I could deceive you by saying so, Mr.\xa0Holmes, but it\r\nwould not be true. De Merville is a broken man. The strong soldier has\r\nbeen utterly demoralized by this incident. He has lost the nerve which\r\nnever failed him on the battlefield and has become a weak, doddering old\r\nman, utterly incapable of contending with a brilliant, forceful rascal\r\nlike this Austrian. My client however is an old friend, one who has\r\nknown the General intimately for many years and taken a paternal\r\ninterest in this young girl since she wore short frocks. He cannot see\r\nthis tragedy consummated without some attempt to stop it. There is\r\nnothing in which Scotland Yard can act. It was his own suggestion that\r\nyou should be called in, but it was, as I have said, on the express\r\nstipulation that he should not be personally involved in the matter. I\r\nhave no doubt, Mr.\xa0Holmes, with your great powers you could\r\neasily trace my client back through me, but I must ask you, as a point\r\nof honour, to refrain from doing so, and not to break in upon his\r\nincognito.”\n\nHolmes gave a whimsical smile.\n\n“I think I may safely promise that,” said he. “I may add that your\r\nproblem interests me, and that I shall be prepared to look into it. How\r\nshall I keep in touch with you?”\n\n“The Carlton Club will find me. But in case of emergency, there is a\r\nprivate telephone call, ‘XX.31.’\u200a”\n\nHolmes noted it down and sat, still smiling, with the open\r\nmemorandum-book upon his knee.\n\n“The Baron’s present address, please?”\n\n“Vernon Lodge, near Kingston. It is a large house. He has been\r\nfortunate in some rather shady speculations and is a rich man, which\r\nnaturally makes him a more dangerous antagonist.”\n\n“Is he at home at present?”\n\n“Yes.”\n\n“Apart from what you have told me, can you give me any further\r\ninformation about the man?”\n\n“He has expensive tastes. He is a horse fancier. For a short time he\r\nplayed polo at Hurlingham, but then this Prague affair got noised about\r\nand he had to leave. He collects books and pictures. He is a man with a\r\nconsiderable artistic side to his nature. He is, I believe, a recognized\r\nauthority upon Chinese pottery and has written a book upon the\r\nsubject.”\n\n“A complex mind,” said Holmes. “All great criminals have that. My old\r\nfriend Charlie Peace was a violin virtuoso. Wainwright was no mean\r\nartist. I could quote many more. Well, Sir James, you will inform your\r\nclient that I am turning my mind upon Baron Gruner. I can say no more. I\r\nhave some sources of information of my own, and I dare say we may find\r\nsome means of opening the matter up.”\n\nWhen our visitor had left us Holmes sat so long in deep thought that\r\nit seemed to me that he had forgotten my presence. At last, however, he\r\ncame briskly back to earth.\n\n“Well, Watson, any views?” he asked.\n\n“I should think you had better see the young lady herself.”\n\n“My dear Watson, if her poor old broken father cannot move her, how\r\nshall I, a stranger, prevail? And yet there is something in the\r\nsuggestion if all else fails. But I think we must begin from a different\r\nangle. I rather fancy that Shinwell Johnson might be a help.”\n\nI have not had occasion to mention Shinwell Johnson in these memoirs\r\nbecause I have seldom drawn my cases from the latter phases of my\r\nfriend’s career. During the first years of the century he became a\r\nvaluable assistant. Johnson, I grieve to say, made his name first as a\r\nvery dangerous villain and served two terms at Parkhurst. Finally he\r\nrepented and allied himself to Holmes, acting as his agent in the huge\r\ncriminal underworld of London and obtaining information which often\r\nproved to be of vital importance. Had Johnson been a “nark” of the\r\npolice he would soon have been exposed, but as he dealt with cases which\r\nnever came directly into the courts, his activities were never realized\r\nby his companions. With the glamour of his two convictions upon him, he\r\nhad the entrée of every nightclub, doss house, and gambling-den in the\r\ntown, and his quick observation and active brain made him an ideal agent\r\nfor gaining information. It was to him that Sherlock Holmes now proposed\r\nto turn.\n\nIt was not possible for me to follow the immediate steps taken by my\r\nfriend, for I had some pressing professional business of my own, but I\r\nmet him by appointment that evening at Simpson’s, where, sitting at a\r\nsmall table in the front window and looking down at the rushing stream\r\nof life in the Strand, he told me something of what had passed.\n\n“Johnson is on the prowl,” said he. “He may pick up some garbage in\r\nthe darker recesses of the underworld, for it is down there, amid the\r\nblack roots of crime, that we must hunt for this man’s secrets.”\n\n“But if the lady will not accept what is already known, why should\r\nany fresh discovery of yours turn her from her purpose?”\n\n“Who knows, Watson? Woman’s heart and mind are insoluble puzzles to\r\nthe male. Murder might be condoned or explained, and yet some smaller\r\noffence might rankle. Baron Gruner remarked to me\ufeff—”\n\n“He remarked to you!”\n\n“Oh, to be sure, I had not told you of my plans. Well, Watson, I love\r\nto come to close grips with my man. I like to meet him eye to eye and\r\nread for myself the stuff that he is made of. When I had given Johnson\r\nhis instructions I took a cab out to Kingston and found the Baron in a\r\nmost affable mood.”\n\n“Did he recognize you?”\n\n“There was no difficulty about that, for I simply sent in my card. He\r\nis an excellent antagonist, cool as ice, silky voiced and soothing as\r\none of your fashionable consultants, and poisonous as a cobra. He has\r\nbreeding in him\ufeff—a real aristocrat of crime with a superficial suggestion\r\nof afternoon tea and all the cruelty of the grave behind it. Yes, I am\r\nglad to have had my attention called to Baron Adelbert Gruner.”\n\n“You say he was affable?”\n\n“A purring cat who thinks he sees prospective mice. Some people’s\r\naffability is more deadly than the violence of coarser souls. His\r\ngreeting was characteristic. ‘I rather thought I should see you sooner\r\nor later, Mr.\xa0Holmes,’ said he. ‘You have been engaged, no\r\ndoubt by General de Merville, to endeavour to stop my marriage with his\r\ndaughter, Violet. That is so, is it not?’\n\n“I acquiesced.\n\n“\u200a‘My dear man,’ said he, ‘you will only ruin your own well-deserved\r\nreputation. It is not a case in which you can possibly succeed. You will\r\nhave barren work, to say nothing of incurring some danger. Let me very\r\nstrongly advise you to draw off at once.’\u200a”\n\n“\u200a‘It is curious,’ I answered, ‘but that was the very advice which I\r\nhad intended to give you. I have a respect for your brains, Baron, and\r\nthe little which I have seen of your personality has not lessened it.\r\nLet me put it to you as man to man. No one wants to rake up your past\r\nand make you unduly uncomfortable. It is over, and you are now in smooth\r\nwaters, but if you persist in this marriage you will raise up a swarm of\r\npowerful enemies who will never leave you alone until they have made\r\nEngland too hot to hold you. Is the game worth it? Surely you would be\r\nwiser if you left the lady alone. It would not be pleasant for you if\r\nthese facts of your past were brought to her notice.’\n\n“The Baron has little waxed tips of hair under his nose, like the\r\nshort antennae of an insect. These quivered with amusement as he\r\nlistened, and he finally broke into a gentle chuckle.\n\n“\u200a‘Excuse my amusement, Mr.\xa0Holmes,’ said he, ‘but it is\r\nreally funny to see you trying to play a hand with no cards in it. I\r\ndon’t think anyone could do it better, but it is rather pathetic all the\r\nsame. Not a colour card there, Mr.\xa0Holmes, nothing but the\r\nsmallest of the small.’\n\n“\u200a‘So you think.’\n\n“\u200a‘So I know. Let me make the thing clear to you, for my own hand is\r\nso strong that I can afford to show it. I have been fortunate enough to\r\nwin the entire affection of this lady. This was given to me in spite of\r\nthe fact that I told her very clearly of all the unhappy incidents in my\r\npast life. I also told her that certain wicked and designing persons\ufeff—I\r\nhope you recognize yourself\ufeff—would come to her and tell her these things,\r\nand I warned her how to treat them. You have heard of post-hypnotic\r\nsuggestion, Mr.\xa0Holmes. Well you will see how it works for\r\na man of personality can use hypnotism without any vulgar passes or\r\ntomfoolery. So she is ready for you and, I have no doubt, would give you\r\nan appointment, for she is quite amenable to her father’s will\ufeff—save only\r\nin the one little matter.’\n\n“Well, Watson, there seemed to be no more to say, so I took my leave\r\nwith as much cold dignity as I could summon, but, as I had my hand on\r\nthe door-handle, he stopped me.\n\n“\u200a‘By the way, Mr.\xa0Holmes,’ said he, ‘did you know Le\r\nBrun, the French agent?’\n\n“\u200a‘Yes,’ said I.\n\n“\u200a‘Do you know what befell him?’\n\n“\u200a‘I heard that he was beaten by some Apaches in the Montmartre\r\ndistrict and crippled for life.’\n\n“\u200a‘Quite true, Mr.\xa0Holmes. By a curious coincidence he\r\nhad been inquiring into my affairs only a week before. Don’t do it,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes; it’s not a lucky thing to do. Several have\r\nfound that out. My last word to you is, go your own way and let me go\r\nmine. Goodbye!’\n\n“So there you are, Watson. You are up to date now.”\n\n“The fellow seems dangerous.”\n\n“Mighty dangerous. I disregard the blusterer, but this is the sort of\r\nman who says rather less than he means.”\n\n“Must you interfere? Does it really matter if he marries the\r\ngirl?”\n\n“Considering that he undoubtedly murdered his last wife, I should say\r\nit mattered very much. Besides, the client! Well, well, we need not\r\ndiscuss that. When you have finished your coffee you had best come home\r\nwith me, for the blithe Shinwell will be there with his report.”\n\nWe found him sure enough, a huge, coarse, red-faced, scorbutic man,\r\nwith a pair of vivid black eyes which were the only external sign of the\r\nvery cunning mind within. It seems that he had dived down into what was\r\npeculiarly his kingdom, and beside him on the settee was a brand which\r\nhe had brought up in the shape of a slim, flame-like young woman with a\r\npale, intense face, youthful, and yet so worn with sin and sorrow that\r\none read the terrible years which had left their leprous mark upon\r\nher.\n\n“This is Miss Kitty Winter,” said Shinwell Johnson, waving his fat\r\nhand as an introduction. “What she don’t know\ufeff—well, there, she’ll speak\r\nfor herself. Put my hand right on her, Mr.\xa0Holmes, within\r\nan hour of your message.”\n\n“I’m easy to find,” said the young woman. “Hell, London, gets me\r\nevery time. Same address for Porky Shinwell. We’re old mates, Porky, you\r\nand I. But, by cripes! there is another who ought to be down in a lower\r\nhell than we if there was any justice in the world! That is the man you\r\nare after, Mr.\xa0Holmes.”\n\nHolmes smiled. “I gather we have your good wishes, Miss Winter.”\n\n“If I can help to put him where he belongs, I’m yours to the rattle,”\r\nsaid our visitor with fierce energy. There was an intensity of hatred in\r\nher white, set face and her blazing eyes such as woman seldom and man\r\nnever can attain.\n\n“You needn’t go into my past, Mr.\xa0Holmes. That’s neither\r\nhere nor there. But what I am Adelbert Gruner made me. If I could pull\r\nhim down!” She clutched frantically with her hands into the air. “Oh, if\r\nI could only pull him into the pit where he has pushed so many!”\n\n“You know how the matter stands?”\n\n“Porky Shinwell has been telling me. He’s after some other poor fool\r\nand wants to marry her this time. You want to stop it. Well, you surely\r\nknow enough about this devil to prevent any decent girl in her senses\r\nwanting to be in the same parish with him.”\n\n“She is not in her senses. She is madly in love. She has been told\r\nall about him. She cares nothing.”\n\n“Told about the murder?”\n\n“Yes.”\n\n“My Lord, she must have a nerve!”\n\n“She puts them all down as slanders.”\n\n“Couldn’t you lay proofs before her silly eyes?”\n\n“Well, can you help us do so?”\n\n“Ain’t I a proof myself? If I stood before her and told her how he\r\nused me\ufeff—”\n\n“Would you do this?”\n\n“Would I? Would I not!”\n\n“Well, it might be worth trying. But he has told her most of his sins\r\nand had pardon from her, and I understand she will not reopen the\r\nquestion.”\n\n“I’ll lay he didn’t tell her all,” said Miss Winter. “I caught a\r\nglimpse of one or two murders besides the one that made such a fuss. He\r\nwould speak of someone in his velvet way and then look at me with a\r\nsteady eye and say: ‘He died within a month.’ It wasn’t hot air, either.\r\nBut I took little notice\ufeff—you see, I loved him myself at that time.\r\nWhatever he did went with me, same as with this poor fool! There was\r\njust one thing that shook me. Yes, by cripes! if it had not been for his\r\npoisonous, lying tongue that explains and soothes. I’d have left him\r\nthat very night. It’s a book he has\ufeff—a brown leather book with a lock,\r\nand his arms in gold on the outside. I think he was a bit drunk that\r\nnight, or he would not have shown it to me.”\n\n“What was it, then?”\n\n“I tell you. Mr.\xa0Holmes, this man collects women, and\r\ntakes a pride in his collection, as some men collect moths or\r\nbutterflies. He had it all in that book. Snapshot photographs, names,\r\ndetails, everything about them. It was a beastly book\ufeff—a book no man,\r\neven if he had come from the gutter, could have put together. But it was\r\nAdelbert Gruner’s book all the same. ‘Souls I have ruined.’ He could\r\nhave put that on the outside if he had been so minded. However, that’s\r\nneither here nor there, for the book would not serve you, and, if it\r\nwould, you can’t get it.”\n\n“Where is it?”\n\n“How can I tell you where it is now? It’s more than a year since I\r\nleft him. I know where he kept it then. He’s a precise, tidy cat of a\r\nman in many of his ways, so maybe it is still in the pigeonhole of the\r\nold bureau in the inner study. Do you know his house?”\n\n“I’ve been in the study,” said Holmes.\n\n“Have you, though? You haven’t been slow on the job if you only\r\nstarted this morning. Maybe dear Adelbert has met his match this time.\r\nThe outer study is the one with the Chinese crockery in it\ufeff—big glass\r\ncupboard between the windows. Then behind his desk is the door that\r\nleads to the inner study\ufeff—a small room where he keeps papers and\r\nthings.”\n\n“Is he not afraid of burglars?”\n\n“Adelbert is no coward. His worst enemy couldn’t say that of him. He\r\ncan look after himself. There’s a burglar alarm at night. Besides, what\r\nis there for a burglar\ufeff—unless they got away with all this fancy\r\ncrockery?”\n\n“No good,” said Shinwell Johnson with the decided voice of the\r\nexpert. “No fence wants stuff of that sort that you can neither melt nor\r\nsell.”\n\n“Quite so,” said Holmes. “Well, now, Miss Winter, if you would call\r\nhere tomorrow evening at five. I would consider in the meanwhile whether\r\nyour suggestion of seeing this lady personally may not be arranged. I am\r\nexceedingly obliged to you for your cooperation. I need not say that my\r\nclients will consider liberally\ufeff—”\n\n“None of that, Mr.\xa0Holmes,” cried the young woman. “I am\r\nnot out for money. Let me see this man in the mud, and I’ve got all I’ve\r\nworked for\ufeff—in the mud with my foot on his cursed face. That’s my price.\r\nI’m with you tomorrow or any other day so long as you are on his track.\r\nPorky here can tell you always where to find me.”\n\nI did not see Holmes again until the following evening when we dined\r\nonce more at our Strand restaurant. He shrugged his shoulders when I\r\nasked him what luck he had had in his interview. Then he told the story,\r\nwhich I would repeat in this way. His hard, dry statement needs some\r\nlittle editing to soften it into the terms of real life.\n\n“There was no difficulty at all about the appointment,” said Holmes,\r\n“for the girl glories in showing abject filial obedience in all\r\nsecondary things in an attempt to atone for her flagrant breach of it in\r\nher engagement. The General phoned that all was ready, and the fiery\r\nMiss W. turned up according to schedule, so that at\r\nhalf-past five a cab deposited us outside 104 Berkeley Square, where the\r\nold soldier resides\ufeff—one of those awful gray London castles which would\r\nmake a church seem frivolous. A footman showed us into a great\r\nyellow-curtained drawing-room, and there was the lady awaiting us,\r\ndemure, pale, self-contained, as inflexible and remote as a snow image\r\non a mountain.\n\n“I don’t quite know how to make her clear to you, Watson. Perhaps you\r\nmay meet her before we are through, and you can use your own gift of\r\nwords. She is beautiful, but with the ethereal otherworld beauty of some\r\nfanatic whose thoughts are set on high. I have seen such faces in the\r\npictures of the old masters of the Middle Ages. How a beastman could\r\nhave laid his vile paws upon such a being of the beyond I cannot\r\nimagine. You may have noticed how extremes call to each other, the\r\nspiritual to the animal, the caveman to the angel. You never saw a worse\r\ncase than this.\n\n“She knew what we had come for, of course\ufeff—that villain had lost no\r\ntime in poisoning her mind against us. Miss Winter’s advent rather\r\namazed her, I think, but she waved us into our respective chairs like a\r\nreverend abbess receiving two rather leprous mendicants. If your head is\r\ninclined to swell, my dear Watson, take a course of Miss Violet de\r\nMerville.\n\n“\u200a‘Well, sir,’ said she in a voice like the wind from an iceberg,\r\n‘your name is familiar to me. You have called, as I understand, to\r\nmalign my fiancé, Baron Gruner. It is only by my father’s request that I\r\nsee you at all, and I warn you in advance that anything you can say\r\ncould not possibly have the slightest effect upon my mind.’\n\n“I was sorry for her, Watson. I thought of her for the moment as I\r\nwould have thought of a daughter of my own. I am not often eloquent. I\r\nuse my head, not my heart. But I really did plead with her with all the\r\nwarmth of words that I could find in my nature. I pictured to her the\r\nawful position of the woman who only wakes to a man’s character after\r\nshe is his wife\ufeff—a woman who has to submit to be caressed by bloody hands\r\nand lecherous lips. I spared her nothing\ufeff—the shame, the fear, the agony,\r\nthe hopelessness of it all. All my hot words could not bring one tinge\r\nof colour to those ivory cheeks or one gleam of emotion to those\r\nabstracted eyes. I thought of what the rascal had said about a\r\npost-hypnotic influence. One could really believe that she was living\r\nabove the earth in some ecstatic dream. Yet there was nothing indefinite\r\nin her replies.\n\n“\u200a‘I have listened to you with patience, Mr.\xa0Holmes,’\r\nsaid she. ‘The effect upon my mind is exactly as predicted. I am aware\r\nthat Adelbert, that my fiancé, has had a stormy life in which he has\r\nincurred bitter hatreds and most unjust aspersions. You are only the\r\nlast of a series who have brought their slanders before me. Possibly you\r\nmean well, though I learn that you are a paid agent who would have been\r\nequally willing to act for the Baron as against him. But in any case I\r\nwish you to understand once for all that I love him and that he loves\r\nme, and that the opinion of all the world is no more to me than the\r\ntwitter of those birds outside the window. If his noble nature has ever\r\nfor an instant fallen, it may be that I have been specially sent to\r\nraise it to its true and lofty level. I am not clear’\ufeff—here she turned\r\neyes upon my companion\ufeff—‘who this young lady may be.’\n\n“I was about to answer when the girl broke in like a whirlwind. If\r\never you saw flame and ice face to face, it was those two women.\n\n“\u200a‘I’ll tell you who I am,’ she cried, springing out of her chair,\r\nher mouth all twisted with passion\ufeff—‘I am his last mistress. I am one of\r\na hundred that he has tempted and used and ruined and thrown into the\r\nrefuse heap, as he will you also. Your refuse heap is more likely to be\r\na grave, and maybe that’s the best. I tell you, you foolish woman, if\r\nyou marry this man he’ll be the death of you. It may be a broken heart\r\nor it may be a broken neck, but he’ll have you one way or the other.\r\nIt’s not out of love for you I’m speaking. I don’t care a tinker’s curse\r\nwhether you live or die. It’s out of hate for him and to spite him and\r\nto get back on him for what he did to me. But it’s all the same, and you\r\nneedn’t look at me like that, my fine lady, for you may be lower than I\r\nam before you are through with it.’\n\n“\u200a‘I should prefer not to discuss such matters,’ said Miss de\r\nMerville coldly. ‘Let me say once for all that I am aware of three\r\npassages in my fiancé’s life in which he became entangled with designing\r\nwomen, and that I am assured of his hearty repentance for any evil that\r\nhe may have done.’\n\n“\u200a‘Three passages!’ screamed my companion. ‘You fool! You unutterable\r\nfool!’\n\n“\u200a‘Mr.\xa0Holmes, I beg that you will bring this interview\r\nto an end,’ said the icy voice. ‘I have obeyed my father’s wish in\r\nseeing you, but I am not compelled to listen to the ravings of this\r\nperson.’\n\n“With an oath Miss Winter darted forward, and if I had not caught her\r\nwrist she would have clutched this maddening woman by the hair. I\r\ndragged her towards the door and was lucky to get her back into the cab\r\nwithout a public scene, for she was beside herself with rage. In a cold\r\nway I felt pretty furious myself, Watson, for there was something\r\nindescribably annoying in the calm aloofness and supreme\r\nself-complaisance of the woman whom we were trying to save. So now once\r\nagain you know exactly how we stand, and it is clear that I must plan\r\nsome fresh opening move, for this gambit won’t work. I’ll keep in touch\r\nwith you, Watson, for it is more than likely that you will have your\r\npart to play, though it is just possible that the next move may lie with\r\nthem rather than with us.”\n\nAnd it did. Their blow fell\ufeff—or his blow rather, for never could I\r\nbelieve that the lady was privy to it. I think I could show you the very\r\npaving-stone upon which I stood when my eyes fell upon the placard, and\r\na pang of horror passed through my very soul. It was between the Grand\r\nHotel and Charing Cross Station, where a one-legged news-vender\r\ndisplayed his evening papers. The date was just two days after the last\r\nconversation. There, black upon yellow, was the terrible news-sheet:\n\nMurderous Attack Upon Sherlock Holmes\n\nI think I stood stunned for some moments. Then I have a confused\r\nrecollection of snatching at a paper, of the remonstrance of the man,\r\nwhom I had not paid, and, finally, of standing in the doorway of a\r\nchemist’s shop while I turned up the fateful paragraph. This was how it\r\nran:\n\nWe learn with regret that Mr.\xa0Sherlock Holmes, the\r\nwell-known private detective, was the victim this morning of a murderous\r\nassault which has left him in a precarious position. There are no exact\r\ndetails to hand, but the event seems to have occurred about twelve\r\no’clock in Regent Street, outside the Café Royal. The attack was made by\r\ntwo men armed with sticks, and Mr.\xa0Holmes was beaten about\r\nthe head and body, receiving injuries which the doctors describe as most\r\nserious. He was carried to Charing Cross Hospital and afterwards\r\ninsisted upon being taken to his rooms in Baker Street. The miscreants\r\nwho attacked him appear to have been respectably dressed men, who\r\nescaped from the bystanders by passing through the Café Royal and out\r\ninto Glasshouse Street behind it.\n\nNo doubt they belonged to that criminal fraternity which has so often\r\nhad occasion to bewail the activity and ingenuity of the injured\r\nman.\n\nI need not say that my eyes had hardly glanced over the paragraph\r\nbefore I had sprung into a hansom and was on my way to Baker Street. I\r\nfound Sir Leslie Oakshott, the famous surgeon, in the hall and his\r\nbrougham waiting at the curb.\n\n“No immediate danger,” was his report. “Two lacerated scalp wounds\r\nand some considerable bruises. Several stitches have been necessary.\r\nMorphine has been injected and quiet is essential, but an interview of a\r\nfew minutes would not be absolutely forbidden.”\n\nWith this permission I stole into the darkened room. The sufferer was\r\nwide awake, and I heard my name in a hoarse whisper. The blind was\r\nthree-quarters down, but one ray of sunlight slanted through and struck\r\nthe bandaged head of the injured man. A crimson patch had soaked through\r\nthe white linen compress. I sat beside him and bent my head.\n\n“All right, Watson. Don’t look so scared,” he muttered in a very weak\r\nvoice. “It’s not as bad as it seems.”\n\n“Thank God for that!”\n\n“I’m a bit of a singlestick expert, as you know. I took most of them\r\non my guard. It was the second man that was too much for me.”\n\n“What can I do, Holmes? Of course, it was that damned fellow who set\r\nthem on. I’ll go and thrash the hide off him if you give the word.”\n\n“Good old Watson! No, we can do nothing there unless the police lay\r\ntheir hands on the men. But their getaway had been well prepared. We may\r\nbe sure of that. Wait a little. I have my plans. The first thing is to\r\nexaggerate my injuries. They’ll come to you for news. Put it on thick,\r\nWatson. Lucky if I live the week out concussion delirium\ufeff—what you like!\r\nYou can’t overdo it.”\n\n“But Sir Leslie Oakshott?”\n\n“Oh, he’s all right. He shall see the worst side of me. I’ll look\r\nafter that.”\n\n“Anything else?”\n\n“Yes. Tell Shinwell Johnson to get that girl out of the way. Those\r\nbeauties will be after her now. They know, of course, that she was with\r\nme in the case. If they dared to do me in it is not likely they will\r\nneglect her. That is urgent. Do it tonight.”\n\n“I’ll go now. Anything more?”\n\n“Put my pipe on the table\ufeff—and the tobacco-slipper. Right! Come in\r\neach morning and we will plan our campaign.”\n\nI arranged with Johnson that evening to take Miss Winter to a quiet\r\nsuburb and see that she lay low until the danger was past.\n\nFor six days the public were under the impression that Holmes was at\r\nthe door of death. The bulletins were very grave and there were sinister\r\nparagraphs in the papers. My continual visits assured me that it was not\r\nso bad as that. His wiry constitution and his determined will were\r\nworking wonders. He was recovering fast, and I had suspicions at times\r\nthat he was really finding himself faster than he pretended even to me.\r\nThere was a curious secretive streak in the man which led to many\r\ndramatic effects, but left even his closest friend guessing as to what\r\nhis exact plans might be. He pushed to an extreme the axiom that the\r\nonly safe plotter was he who plotted alone. I was nearer him than anyone\r\nelse, and yet I was always conscious of the gap between.\n\nOn the seventh day the stitches were taken out, in spite of which\r\nthere was a report of erysipelas in the evening papers. The same evening\r\npapers had an announcement which I was bound, sick or well, to carry to\r\nmy friend. It was simply that among the passengers on the Cunard boat\r\nRuritania, starting from Liverpool on Friday, was the Baron\r\nAdelbert Gruner, who had some important financial business to settle in\r\nthe States before his impending wedding to Miss Violet de Merville, only\r\ndaughter of, etc., etc. Holmes\r\nlistened to the news with a cold, concentrated look upon his pale face,\r\nwhich told me that it hit him hard.\n\n“Friday!” he cried. “Only three clear days. I believe the rascal\r\nwants to put himself out of danger’s way. But he won’t, Watson! By the\r\nLord Harry, he won’t! Now, Watson, I want you to do something for\r\nme.”\n\n“I am here to be used, Holmes.”\n\n“Well, then, spend the next twenty-four hours in an intensive study\r\nof Chinese pottery.”\n\nHe gave no explanations and I asked for none. By long experience I\r\nhad learned the wisdom of obedience. But when I had left his room I\r\nwalked down Baker Street, revolving in my head how on earth I was to\r\ncarry out so strange an order. Finally I drove to the London Library in\r\nSt.\xa0James’s Square, put the matter to my friend Lomax, the\r\nsublibrarian, and departed to my rooms with a goodly volume under my\r\narm.\n\nIt is said that the barrister who crams up a case with such care that\r\nhe can examine an expert witness upon the Monday has forgotten all his\r\nforced knowledge before the Saturday. Certainly I should not like now to\r\npose as an authority upon ceramics. And yet all that evening, and all\r\nthat night with a short interval for rest, and all next morning, I was\r\nsucking in knowledge and committing names to memory. There I learned of\r\nthe hallmarks of the great artist-decorators, of the mystery of cyclical\r\ndates, the marks of the Hung-wu and the beauties of the Yung-lo, the\r\nwritings of Tang-ying, and the glories of the primitive period of the\r\nSung and the Yuan. I was charged with all this information when I called\r\nupon Holmes next evening. He was out of bed now, though you would not\r\nhave guessed it from the published reports, and he sat with his\r\nmuch-bandaged head resting upon his hand in the depth of his favourite\r\narmchair.\n\n“Why, Holmes,” I said, “if one believed the papers, you are\r\ndying.”\n\n“That,” said he, “is the very impression which I intended to convey.\r\nAnd now, Watson, have you learned your lessons?”\n\n“At least I have tried to.”\n\n“Good. You could keep up an intelligent conversation on the\r\nsubject?”\n\n“I believe I could.”\n\n“Then hand me that little box from the mantelpiece.”\n\nHe opened the lid and took out a small object most carefully wrapped\r\nin some fine Eastern silk. This he unfolded, and disclosed a delicate\r\nlittle saucer of the most beautiful deep-blue colour.\n\n“It needs careful handling, Watson. This is the real eggshell pottery\r\nof the Ming dynasty. No finer piece ever passed through Christie’s. A\r\ncomplete set of this would be worth a king’s ransom\ufeff—in fact, it is\r\ndoubtful if there is a complete set outside the imperial palace of\r\nPeking. The sight of this would drive a real connoisseur wild.”\n\n“What am I to do with it?”\n\nHolmes handed me a card upon which was printed:\r\n“Dr.\xa0Hill Barton, 369 Half Moon Street.”\n\n“That is your name for the evening, Watson. You will call upon Baron\r\nGruner. I know something of his habits, and at half-past eight he would\r\nprobably be disengaged. A note will tell him in advance that you are\r\nabout to call, and you will say that you are bringing him a specimen of\r\nan absolutely unique set of Ming china. You may as well be a medical\r\nman, since that is a part which you can play without duplicity. You are\r\na collector this set has come your way, you have heard of the Baron’s\r\ninterest in the subject, and you are not averse to selling at a\r\nprice.”\n\n“What price?”\n\n“Well asked, Watson. You would certainly fall down badly if you did\r\nnot know the value of your own wares. This saucer was got for me by Sir\r\nJames, and comes, I understand, from the collection of his client. You\r\nwill not exaggerate if you say that it could hardly be matched in the\r\nworld.”\n\n“I could perhaps suggest that the set should be valued by an\r\nexpert.”\n\n“Excellent, Watson! You scintillate today. Suggest Christie or\r\nSotheby. Your delicacy prevents your putting a price for yourself.”\n\n“But if he won’t see me?”\n\n“Oh, yes, he will see you. He has the collection mania in its most\r\nacute form\ufeff—and especially on this subject, on which he is an\r\nacknowledged authority. Sit down, Watson, and I will dictate the letter.\r\nNo answer needed. You will merely say that you are coming, and why.”\n\nIt was an admirable document, short, courteous, and stimulating to\r\nthe curiosity of the connoisseur. A district messenger was duly\r\ndispatched with it. On the same evening, with the precious saucer in my\r\nhand and the card of Dr.\xa0Hill Barton in my pocket, I set\r\noff on my own adventure.\n\nThe beautiful house and grounds indicated that Baron Gruner was, as\r\nSir James had said, a man of considerable wealth. A long winding drive,\r\nwith banks of rare shrubs on either side, opened out into a great\r\ngravelled square adorned with statues. The place had been built by a\r\nSouth African gold king in the days of the great boom, and the long, low\r\nhouse with the turrets at the corners, though an architectural\r\nnightmare, was imposing in its size and solidity. A butler, who would\r\nhave adorned a bench of bishops, showed me in and handed me over to a\r\nplush-clad footman, who ushered me into the Baron’s presence.\n\nHe was standing at the open front of a great case which stood between\r\nthe windows and which contained part of his Chinese collection. He\r\nturned as I entered with a small brown vase in his hand.\n\n“Pray sit down, Doctor,” said he. “I was looking over my own\r\ntreasures and wondering whether I could really afford to add to them.\r\nThis little Tang specimen, which dates from the seventh century, would\r\nprobably interest you. I am sure you never saw finer workmanship or a\r\nricher glaze. Have you the Ming saucer with you of which you spoke?”\n\nI carefully unpacked it and handed it to him. He seated himself at\r\nhis desk, pulled over the lamp, for it was growing dark, and set himself\r\nto examine it. As he did so the yellow light beat upon his own features,\r\nand I was able to study them at my ease.\n\nHe was certainly a remarkably handsome man. His European reputation\r\nfor beauty was fully deserved. In figure he was not more than of middle\r\nsize, but was built upon graceful and active lines. His face was\r\nswarthy, almost Oriental, with large, dark, languorous eyes which might\r\neasily hold an irresistible fascination for women. His hair and\r\nmoustache were raven black, the latter short, pointed, and carefully\r\nwaxed. His features were regular and pleasing, save only his straight,\r\nthin-lipped mouth. If ever I saw a murderer’s mouth it was there\ufeff—a\r\ncruel, hard gash in the face, compressed, inexorable, and terrible. He\r\nwas ill-advised to train his moustache away from it, for it was Nature’s\r\ndanger-signal, set as a warning to his victims. His voice was engaging\r\nand his manners perfect. In age I should have put him at little over\r\nthirty, though his record afterwards showed that he was forty-two.\n\n“Very fine\ufeff—very fine indeed!” he said at last. “And you say you have\r\na set of six to correspond. What puzzles me is that I should not have\r\nheard of such magnificent specimens. I only know of one in England to\r\nmatch this, and it is certainly not likely to be in the market. Would it\r\nbe indiscreet if I were to ask you, Dr.\xa0Hill Barton, how\r\nyou obtained this?”\n\n“Does it really matter?” I asked with as careless an air as I could\r\nmuster.\n\n“You can see that the piece is genuine, and, as to the value, I am\r\ncontent to take an expert’s valuation.”\n\n“Very mysterious,” said he with a quick, suspicious flash of his dark\r\neyes. “In dealing with objects of such value, one naturally wishes to\r\nknow all about the transaction. That the piece is genuine is certain. I\r\nhave no doubts at all about that. But suppose\ufeff—I am bound to take every\r\npossibility into account\ufeff—that it should prove afterwards that you had no\r\nright to sell?”\n\n“I would guarantee you against any claim of the son.”\n\n“That, of course, would open up the question as to what your\r\nguarantee was worth.”\n\n“My bankers would answer that.”\n\n“Quite so. And yet the whole transaction strikes me as rather\r\nunusual.”\n\n“You can do business or not,” said I with indifference. “I have given\r\nyou the first offer as I understood that you were a connoisseur, but I\r\nshall have no difficulty in other quarters.”\n\n“Who told you I was a connoisseur?”\n\n“I was aware that you had written a book upon the subject.”\n\n“Have you read the book?”\n\n“No.”\n\n“Dear me, this becomes more and more difficult for me to understand!\r\nYou are a connoisseur and collector with a very valuable piece in your\r\ncollection, and yet you have never troubled to consult the one book\r\nwhich would have told you of the real meaning and value of what you\r\nheld. How do you explain that?”\n\n“I am a very busy man. I am a doctor in practice.”\n\n“That is no answer. If a man has a hobby he follows it up, whatever\r\nhis other pursuits may be. You said in your note that you were a\r\nconnoisseur.”\n\n“So I am.”\n\n“Might I ask you a few questions to test you? I am obliged to tell\r\nyou, Doctor\ufeff—if you are indeed a doctor\ufeff—that the incident becomes more\r\nand more suspicious. I would ask you what do you know of the Emperor\r\nShomu and how do you associate him with the Shoso-in near Nara? Dear me,\r\ndoes that puzzle you? Tell me a little about the Nonhern Wei dynasty and\r\nits place in the history of ceramics.”\n\nI sprang from my chair in simulated anger.\n\n“This is intolerable, sir,” said I. “I came here to do you a favour,\r\nand not to be examined as if I were a schoolboy. My knowledge on these\r\nsubjects may be second only to your own, but I certainly shall not\r\nanswer questions which have been put in so offensive a way.”\n\nHe looked at me steadily. The languor had gone from his eyes. They\r\nsuddenly glared. There was a gleam of teeth from between those cruel\r\nlips.\n\n“What is the game? You are here as a spy. You are an emissary of\r\nHolmes. This is a trick that you are playing upon me. The fellow is\r\ndying I hear, so he sends his tools to keep watch upon me. You’ve made\r\nyour way in here without leave, and, by God! you may find it harder to\r\nget out than to get in.”\n\nHe had sprung to his feet, and I stepped back, bracing myself for an\r\nattack, for the man was beside himself with rage. He may have suspected\r\nme from the first; certainly this cross-examination had shown him the\r\ntruth; but it was clear that I could not hope to deceive him. He dived\r\nhis hand into a side-drawer and rummaged furiously. Then something\r\nstruck upon his ear, for he stood listening intently.\n\n“Ah!” he cried. “Ah!” and dashed into the room behind him.\n\nTwo steps took me to the open door, and my mind will ever carry a\r\nclear picture of the scene within. The window leading out to the garden\r\nwas wide open. Beside it, looking like some terrible ghost, his head gin\r\nwith bloody bandages, his face drawn and white, stood Sherlock Holmes.\r\nThe next instant he was through the gap, and I heard the crash of his\r\nbody among the laurel bushes outside. With a howl of rage the master of\r\nthe house rushed after him to the open window.\n\nAnd then! It was done in an instant, and yet I clearly saw it. An\r\narm\ufeff—a woman’s arm\ufeff—shot out from among the leaves. At the same instant\r\nthe Baron uttered a horrible cry\ufeff—a yell which will always ring in my\r\nmemory. He clapped his two hands to his face and rushed round the room,\r\nbeating his head horribly against the walls. Then he fell upon the\r\ncarpet, rolling and writhing, while scream after scream resounded\r\nthrough the house.\n\n“Water! For God’s sake, water!” was his cry.\n\nI seized a carafe from a side-table and rushed to his aid. At the\r\nsame moment the butler and several footmen ran in from the hall. I\r\nremember that one of them fainted as I knelt by the injured man and\r\nturned that awful face to the light of the lamp. The vitriol was eating\r\ninto it everywhere and dripping from the ears and the chin. One eye was\r\nalready white and glazed. The other was red and inflamed. The features\r\nwhich I had admired a few minutes before were now like some beautiful\r\npainting over which the artist has passed a wet and foul sponge. They\r\nwere blurred, discoloured, inhuman, terrible.\n\nIn a few words I explained exactly what had occurred, so far as the\r\nvitriol attack was concerned. Some had climbed through the window and\r\nothers had rushed out on to the lawn, but it was dark and it had begun\r\nto rain. Between his screams the victim raged and raved against the\r\navenger. “It was that hellcat, Kitty Winter!” he cried. “Oh, the\r\nshe-devil! She shall pay for it! She shall pay! Oh, God in heaven, this\r\npain is more than I can bear!”\n\nI bathed his face in oil, put cotton wadding on the raw surfaces, and\r\nadministered a hypodermic of morphia. All suspicion of me had passed\r\nfrom his mind in the presence of this shock, and he clung to my hands as\r\nif I might have the power even yet to clear those dead-fish eyes which\r\nglazed up at me. I could have wept over the ruin had l not remembered\r\nvery clearly the vile life which had led up to so hideous a change. It\r\nwas loathsome to feel the pawing of his burning hands, and I was\r\nrelieved when his family surgeon, closely followed by a specialist, came\r\nto relieve me of my charge. An inspector of police had also arrived, and\r\nto him I handed my real card. It would have been useless as well as\r\nfoolish to do otherwise, for I was nearly as well known by sight at the\r\nYard as Holmes himself. Then I left that house of gloom and terror.\r\nWithin an hour I was at Baker Street.\n\nHolmes was seated in his familiar chair, looking very pale and\r\nexhausted. Apart from his injuries, even his iron nerves had been\r\nshocked by the events of the evening, and he listened with horror to my\r\naccount of the Baron’s transformation.\n\n“The wages of sin, Watson\ufeff—the wages of sin!” said he. “Sooner or\r\nlater it will always come. God knows, there was sin enough,” he added,\r\ntaking up a brown volume from the table. “Here is the book the woman\r\ntalked of. If this will not break off the marriage, nothing ever could.\r\nBut it will, Watson. It must. No self-respecting woman could stand\r\nit.”\n\n“It is his love diary?”\n\n“Or his lust diary. Call it what you will. The moment the woman told\r\nus of it I realized what a tremendous weapon was there if we could but\r\nlay our hands on it. I said nothing at the time to indicate my thoughts,\r\nfor this woman might have given it away. But I brooded over it. Then\r\nthis assault upon me gave me the chance of letting the Baron think that\r\nno precautions need be taken against me. That was all to the good. I\r\nwould have waited a little longer, but his visit to America forced my\r\nhand. He would never have left so compromising a document behind him.\r\nTherefore we had to act at once. Burglary at night is impossible. He\r\ntakes precautions. But there was a chance in the evening if I could only\r\nbe sure that his attention was engaged. That was where you and your blue\r\nsaucer came in. But I had to be sure of the position of the book, and I\r\nknew I had only a few minutes in which to act, for my time was limited\r\nby your knowledge of Chinese pottery. Therefore I gathered the girl up\r\nat the last moment. How could I guess what the little packet was that\r\nshe carried so carefully under her cloak? I thought she had come\r\naltogether on my business, but it seems she had some of her own.”\n\n“He guessed I came from you.”\n\n“I feared he would. But you held him in play just long enough for me\r\nto get the book, though not long enough for an unobserved escape. Ah,\r\nSir James, I am very glad you have come!”\n\nOur courtly friend had appeared in answer to a previous summons. He\r\nlistened with the deepest attention to Holmes’s account of what had\r\noccurred.\n\n“You have done wonders\ufeff—wonders!” he cried when he had heard the\r\nnarrative. “But if these injuries are as terrible as\r\nDr.\xa0Watson describes, then surely our purpose of thwarting\r\nthe marriage is sufficiently gained without the use of this horrible\r\nbook.”\n\nHolmes shook his head.\n\n“Women of the De Merville type do not act like that. She would love\r\nhim the more as a disfigured martyr. No, no. It is his moral side, not\r\nhis physical, which we have to destroy. That book will bring her back to\r\nearth\ufeff—and I know nothing else that could. It is in his own writing. She\r\ncannot get past it.”\n\nSir James carried away both it and the precious saucer. As I was\r\nmyself overdue, I went down with him into the street. A brougham was\r\nwaiting for him. He sprang in, gave a hurried order to the cockaded\r\ncoachman, and drove swiftly away. He flung his overcoat half out of the\r\nwindow to cover the armorial bearings upon the panel, but I had seen\r\nthem in the glare of our fanlight none the less. I gasped with surprise.\r\nThen I turned back and ascended the stair to Holmes’s room.\n\n“I have found out who our client is,” I cried, bursting with my great\r\nnews. “Why, Holmes, it is\ufeff—”\n\n“It is a loyal friend and a chivalrous gentleman,” said Holmes,\r\nholding up a restraining hand. “Let that now and forever be enough for\r\nus.”\n\nI do not know how the incriminating book was used. Sir James may have\r\nmanaged it. Or it is more probable that so delicate a task was entrusted\r\nto the young lady’s father. The effect, at any rate, was all that could\r\nbe desired.\n\nThree days later appeared a paragraph in the Morning Post to\r\nsay that the marriage between Baron Adelbert Gruner and Miss Violet de\r\nMerville would not take place. The same paper had the first police-court\r\nhearing of the proceedings against Miss Kitty Winter on the grave charge\r\nof vitriol-throwing. Such extenuating circumstances came out in the\r\ntrial that the sentence, as will be remembered was the lowest that was\r\npossible for such an offence. Sherlock Holmes was threatened with a\r\nprosecution for burglary, but when an object is good and a client is\r\nsufficiently illustrious, even the rigid British law becomes human and\r\nelastic. My friend has not yet stood in the dock.\n\nThe Adventure of the Blanched Soldier\n\nThe ideas of my friend Watson, though limited, are exceedingly\r\npertinacious. For a long time he has worried me to write an experience\r\nof my own. Perhaps I have rather invited this persecution, since I have\r\noften had occasion to point out to him how superficial are his own\r\naccounts and to accuse him of pandering to popular taste instead of\r\nconfining himself rigidly to facts and figures. “Try it yourself,\r\nHolmes!” he has retorted, and I am compelled to admit that, having taken\r\nmy pen in my hand, I do begin to realize that the matter must be\r\npresented in such a way as may interest the reader. The following case\r\ncan hardly fail to do so, as it is among the strangest happenings in my\r\ncollection though it chanced that Watson had no note of it in his\r\ncollection. Speaking of my old friend and biographer, I would take this\r\nopportunity to remark that if I burden myself with a companion in my\r\nvarious little inquiries it is not done out of sentiment or caprice, but\r\nit is that Watson has some remarkable characteristics of his own to\r\nwhich in his modesty he has given small attention amid his exaggerated\r\nestimates of my own performances. A confederate who foresees your\r\nconclusions and course of action is always dangerous, but one to whom\r\neach development comes as a perpetual surprise, and to whom the future\r\nis always a closed book, is indeed an ideal helpmate.\n\nI find from my notebook that it was in January, 1903, just after the\r\nconclusion of the Boer War, that I had my visit from\r\nMr.\xa0James M. Dodd, a big, fresh, sunburned, upstanding\r\nBriton. The good Watson had at that time deserted me for a wife, the\r\nonly selfish action which I can recall in our association. I was\r\nalone.\n\nIt is my habit to sit with my back to the window and to place my\r\nvisitors in the opposite chair, where the light falls full upon them.\r\nMr.\xa0James M. Dodd seemed somewhat at a loss how to begin\r\nthe interview. I did not attempt to help him, for his silence gave me\r\nmore time for observation. I have found it wise to impress clients with\r\na sense of power, and so I gave him some of my conclusions.\n\n“From South Africa, sir, I perceive.”\n\n“Yes, sir,” he answered, with some surprise.\n\n“Imperial Yeomanry, I fancy.”\n\n“Exactly.”\n\n“Middlesex Corps, no doubt.”\n\n“That is so. Mr.\xa0Holmes, you are a wizard.”\n\nI smiled at his bewildered expression.\n\n“When a gentleman of virile appearance enters my room with such tan\r\nupon his face as an English sun could never give, and with his\r\nhandkerchief in his sleeve instead of in his pocket, it is not difficult\r\nto place him. You wear a short beard, which shows that you were not a\r\nregular. You have the cut of a riding-man. As to Middlesex, your card\r\nhas already shown me that you are a stockbroker from Throgmorton Street.\r\nWhat other regiment would you join?”\n\n“You see everything.”\n\n“I see no more than you, but I have trained myself to notice what I\r\nsee. However, Mr.\xa0Dodd, it was not to discuss the science\r\nof observation that you called upon me this morning. What has been\r\nhappening at Tuxbury Old Park?”\n\n“Mr.\xa0Holmes\ufeff—!”\n\n“My dear sir, there is no mystery. Your letter came with that\r\nheading, and as you fixed this appointment in very pressing terms it was\r\nclear that something sudden and important had occurred.”\n\n“Yes, indeed. But the letter was written in the afternoon, and a good\r\ndeal has happened since then. If Colonel Emsworth had not kicked me\r\nout\ufeff—”\n\n“Kicked you out!”\n\n“Well, that was what it amounted to. He is a hard nail, is Colonel\r\nEmsworth. The greatest martinet in the Army in his day, and it was a day\r\nof rough language, too. I couldn’t have stuck the colonel if it had not\r\nbeen for Godfrey’s sake.”\n\nI lit my pipe and leaned back in my chair.\n\n“Perhaps you will explain what you are talking about.”\n\nMy client grinned mischievously.\n\n“I had got into the way of supposing that you knew everything without\r\nbeing told,” said he. “But I will give you the facts, and I hope to God\r\nthat you will be able to tell me what they mean. I’ve been awake all\r\nnight puzzling my brain, and the more I think the more incredible does\r\nit become.\n\n“When I joined up in January, 1901\ufeff—just two years ago\ufeff—young Godfrey\r\nEmsworth had joined the same squadron. He was Colonel Emsworth’s only\r\nson\ufeff—Emsworth the Crimean V. C.\ufeff—and he had the fighting\r\nblood in him, so it is no wonder he volunteered. There was not a finer\r\nlad in the regiment. We formed a friendship\ufeff—the sort of friendship which\r\ncan only be made when one lives the same life and shares the same joys\r\nand sorrows. He was my mate\ufeff—and that means a good deal in the Army. We\r\ntook the rough and the smooth together for a year of hard fighting. Then\r\nhe was hit with a bullet from an elephant gun in the action near Diamond\r\nHill outside Pretoria. I got one letter from the hospital at Cape Town\r\nand one from Southampton. Since then not a word\ufeff—not one word,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes, for six months and more, and he my closest\r\npal.\n\n“Well, when the war was over, and we all got back, I wrote to his\r\nfather and asked where Godfrey was. No answer. I waited a bit and then I\r\nwrote again. This time I had a reply, short and gruff. Godfrey had gone\r\non a voyage round the world, and it was not likely that he would be back\r\nfor a year. That was all.\n\n“I wasn’t satisfied, Mr.\xa0Holmes. The whole thing seemed\r\nto me so damned unnatural. He was a good lad, and he would not drop a\r\npal like that. It was not like him. Then, again, I happened to know that\r\nhe was heir to a lot of money, and also that his father and he did not\r\nalways hit it off too well. The old man was sometimes a bully, and young\r\nGodfrey had too much spirit to stand it. No, I wasn’t satisfied, and I\r\ndetermined that I would get to the root of the matter. It happened,\r\nhowever, that my own affairs needed a lot of straightening out, after\r\ntwo years’ absence, and so it is only this week that I have been able to\r\ntake up Godfrey’s case again. But since I have taken it up I mean to\r\ndrop everything in order to see it through.”\n\nMr.\xa0James M. Dodd appeared to be the sort of person whom\r\nit would be better to have as a friend than as an enemy. His blue eyes\r\nwere stern and his square jaw had set hard as he spoke.\n\n“Well, what have you done?” I asked.\n\n“My first move was to get down to his home, Tuxbury Old Park, near\r\nBedford, and to see for myself how the ground lay. I wrote to the\r\nmother, therefore\ufeff—I had had quite enough of the curmudgeon of a\r\nfather\ufeff—and I made a clean frontal attack: Godfrey was my chum, I had a\r\ngreat deal of interest which I might tell her of our common experiences,\r\nI should be in the neighbourhood, would there be any objection, et\r\ncetera? In reply I had quite an amiable answer from her and an offer to\r\nput me up for the night. That was what took me down on Monday.\n\n“Tuxbury Old Hall is inaccessible\ufeff—five miles from anywhere. There was\r\nno trap at the station, so I had to walk, carrying my suitcase, and it\r\nwas nearly dark before I arrived. It is a great wandering house,\r\nstanding in a considerable park. I should judge it was of all sorts of\r\nages and styles, starting on a half-timbered Elizabethan foundation and\r\nending in a Victorian portico. Inside it was all panelling and tapestry\r\nand half-effaced old pictures, a house of shadows and mystery. There was\r\na butler, old Ralph, who seemed about the same age as the house, and\r\nthere was his wife, who might have been older. She had been Godfrey’s\r\nnurse, and I had heard him speak of her as second only to his mother in\r\nhis affections, so I was drawn to her in spite of her queer appearance.\r\nThe mother I liked also\ufeff—a gentle little white mouse of a woman. It was\r\nonly the colonel himself whom I barred.\n\n“We had a bit of barney right away, and I should have walked back to\r\nthe station if I had not felt that it might be playing his game for me\r\nto do so. I was shown straight into his study, and there I found him, a\r\nhuge, bow-backed man with a smoky skin and a straggling gray beard,\r\nseated behind his littered desk. A red-veined nose jutted out like a\r\nvulture’s beak, and two fierce gray eyes glared at me from under tufted\r\nbrows. I could understand now why Godfrey seldom spoke of his\r\nfather.\n\n“\u200a‘Well, sir,’ said he in a rasping voice, ‘I should be interested to\r\nknow the real reasons for this visit.’\n\n“I answered that I had explained them in my letter to his wife.\n\n“\u200a‘Yes, yes, you said that you had known Godfrey in Africa. We have,\r\nof course, only your word for that.’\n\n“\u200a‘I have his letters to me in my pocket.’\n\n“\u200a‘Kindly let me see them.’\n\n“He glanced at the two which I handed him, and then he tossed them\r\nback.\n\n“\u200a‘Well, what then?’ he asked.\n\n“\u200a‘I was fond of your son Godfrey, sir. Many ties and memories united\r\nus. Is it not natural that I should wonder at his sudden silence and\r\nshould wish to know what has become of him?’\n\n“\u200a‘I have some recollections, sir, that I had already corresponded\r\nwith you and had told you what had become of him. He has gone upon a\r\nvoyage round the world. His health was in a poor way after his African\r\nexperiences, and both his mother and I were of opinion that camplete\r\nrest and change were needed. Kindly pass that explanation on to any\r\nother friends who may be interested in the matter.’\n\n“\u200a‘Certainly,’ I answered. ‘But perhaps you would have the goodness\r\nto let me have the name of the steamer and of the line by which he\r\nsailed, together with the date. I have no doubt that I should be able to\r\nget a letter through to him.’\n\n“My request seemed both to puzzle and to irritate my host. His great\r\neyebrows came down over his eyes, and he tapped his fingers impatiently\r\non the table. He looked up at last with the expression of one who has\r\nseen his adversary make a dangerous move at chess, and has decided how\r\nto meet it.\n\n“\u200a‘Many people, Mr.\xa0Dodd,’ said he, ‘would take offence\r\nat your infernal pertinacity and would think that this insistence had\r\nreached the point of damned impertinence.’\n\n“\u200a‘You must put it down, sir, to my real love for your son.’\n\n“\u200a‘Exactly. I have already made every allowance upon that score. I\r\nmust ask you, however, to drop these inquiries. Every family has its own\r\ninner knowledge and its own motives, which cannot always be made clear\r\nto outsiders, however well-intentioned. My wife is anxious to hear\r\nsomething of Godfrey’s past which you are in a position to tell her, but\r\nI would ask you to let the present and the future alone. Such inquiries\r\nserve no useful purpose, sir, and place us in a delicate and difficult\r\nposition.’\n\n“So I came to a dead end, Mr.\xa0Holmes. There was no\r\ngetting past it. I could only pretend to accept the situation and\r\nregister a vow inwardly that I would never rest until my friend’s fate\r\nhad been cleared up. It was a dull evening. We dined quietly, the three\r\nof us, in a gloomy, faded old room. The lady questioned me eagerly about\r\nher son, but the old man seemed morose and depressed. I was so bored by\r\nthe whole proceeding that I made an excuse as soon as I decently could\r\nand retired to my bedroom. It was a large, bare room on the ground\r\nfloor, as gloomy as the rest of the house, but after a year of sleeping\r\nupon the veldt, Mr.\xa0Holmes, one is not too particular about\r\none’s quarters. I opened the curtains and looked out into the garden,\r\nremarking that it was a fine night with a bright half-moon. Then I sat\r\ndown by the roaring fire with the lamp on a table beside me, and\r\nendeavoured to distract my mind with a novel. I was interrupted,\r\nhowever, by Ralph, the old butler, who came in with a fresh supply of\r\ncoals.\n\n“\u200a‘I thought you might run short in the nighttime, sir. It is bitter\r\nweather and these rooms are cold.’\n\n“He hesitated before leaving the room, and when I looked round he was\r\nstanding facing me with a wistful look upon his wrinkled face.\n\n“\u200a‘Beg your pardon, sir, but I could not help hearing what you said\r\nof young Master Godfrey at dinner. You know, sir, that my wife nursed\r\nhim, and so I may say I am his foster-father. It’s natural we should\r\ntake an interest. And you say he carried himself well, sir?’\n\n“\u200a‘There was no braver man in the regiment. He pulled me out once\r\nfrom under the rifles of the Boers, or maybe I should not be here.’\n\n“The old butler rubbed his skinny hands.\n\n“\u200a‘Yes, sir, yes, that is Master Godfrey all over. He was always\r\ncourageous. There’s not a tree in the park, sir, that he has not\r\nclimbed. Nothing would stop him. He was a fine boy\ufeff—and oh, sir, he was a\r\nfine man.’\n\n“I sprang to my feet.\n\n“\u200a‘Look here!’ I cried. ‘You say he was. You speak as if he were\r\ndead. What is all this mystery? What has become of Godfrey\r\nEmsworth?’\n\n“I gripped the old man by the shoulder, but he shrank away.\n\n“\u200a‘I don’t know what you mean, sir. Ask the master about Master\r\nGodfrey. He knows. It is not for me to interfere.’\n\n“He was leaving the room, but I held his arm.\n\n“\u200a‘Listen,’ I said. ‘You are going to answer one question before you\r\nleave if I have to hold you all night. Is Godfrey dead?’\u200a”\n\n“He could not face my eyes. He was like a man hypnotized The answer\r\nwas dragged from his lips. It was a terrible and unexpected one.\n\n“\u200a‘I wish to God he was!’ he cried, and, tearing himself free he\r\ndashed from the room.\n\n“You will think, Mr.\xa0Holmes, that I returned to my chair\r\nin no very happy state of mind. The old man’s words seemed to me to bear\r\nonly one interpretation. Clearly my poor friend had become involved in\r\nsome criminal or, at the least, disreputable transaction which touched\r\nthe family honour. That stern old man had sent his son away and hidden\r\nhim from the world lest some scandal should come to light. Godfrey was a\r\nreckless fellow. He was easily influenced by those around him. No doubt\r\nhe had fallen into bad hands and been misled to his ruin. It was a\r\npiteous business, if it was indeed so, but even now it was my duty to\r\nhunt him out and see if I could aid him. I was anxiously pondering the\r\nmatter when I looked up, and there was Godfrey Emsworth standing before\r\nme.”\n\nMy client had paused as one in deep emotion.\n\n“Pray continue,” I said. “Your problem presents some very unusual\r\nfeatures.”\n\n“He was outside the window, Mr.\xa0Holmes, with his face\r\npressed against the glass. I have told you that I looked out at the\r\nnight. When I did so I left the curtains partly open. His figure was\r\nframed in this gap. The window came down to the ground and I could see\r\nthe whole length of it, but it was his face which held my gaze. He was\r\ndeadly pale\ufeff—never have I seen a man so white. I reckon ghosts may look\r\nlike that; but his eyes met mine, and they were the eyes of a living\r\nman. He sprang back when he saw that I was looking at him, and he\r\nvanished into the darkness.\n\n“There was something shocking about the man, Mr.\xa0Holmes.\r\nIt wasn’t merely that ghastly face glimmering as white as cheese in the\r\ndarkness. It was more subtle than that\ufeff—something slinking, something\r\nfurtive, something guilty\ufeff—something very unlike the frank, manly lad\r\nthat I had known. It left a feeling of horror in my mind.\n\n“But when a man has been soldiering for a year or two with brother\r\nBoer as a playmate, he keeps his nerve and acts quickly. Godfrey had\r\nhardly vanished before I was at the window. There was an awkward catch,\r\nand I was some little time before I could throw it up. Then I nipped\r\nthrough and ran down the garden path in the direction that I thought he\r\nmight have taken.\n\n“It was a long path and the light was not very good, but it seemed to\r\nme something was moving ahead of me. I ran on and called his name, but\r\nit was no use. When I got to the end of the path there were several\r\nothers branching in different directions to various outhouses. I stood\r\nhesitating, and as I did so I heard distinctly the sound of a closing\r\ndoor. It was not behind me in the house, but ahead of me, somewhere in\r\nthe darkness. That was enough, Mr.\xa0Holmes, to assure me\r\nthat what I had seen was not a vision. Godfrey had run away from me, and\r\nhe had shut a door behind him. Of that I was certain.\n\n“There was nothing more I could do, and I spent an uneasy night\r\nturning the matter over in my mind and trying to find some theory which\r\nwould cover the facts. Next day I found the colonel rather more\r\nconciliatory, and as his wife remarked that there were some places of\r\ninterest in the neighbourhood, it gave me an opening to ask whether my\r\npresence for one more night would incommode them. A somewhat grudging\r\nacquiescence from the old man gave me a clear day in which to make my\r\nobservations. I was already perfectly convinced that Godfrey was in\r\nhiding somewhere near, but where and why remained to be solved.\n\n“The house was so large and so rambling that a regiment might be hid\r\naway in it and no one the wiser. If the secret lay there it was\r\ndifficult for me to penetrate it. But the door which I had heard close\r\nwas certainly not in the house. I must explore the garden and see what I\r\ncould find. There was no difficulty in the way, for the old people were\r\nbusy in their own fashion and left me to my own devices.\n\n“There were several small outhouses, but at the end of the garden\r\nthere was a detached building of some size\ufeff—large enough for a gardener’s\r\nor a gamekeeper’s residence. Could this be the place whence the sound of\r\nthat shutting door had come? I approached it in a careless fashion as\r\nthough I were strolling aimlessly round the grounds. As I did so, a\r\nsmall, brisk, bearded man in a black coat and bowler hat\ufeff—not at all the\r\ngardener type\ufeff—came out of the door. To my surprise, he locked it after\r\nhim and put the key in his pocket. Then he looked at me with some\r\nsurprise on his face.\n\n“\u200a‘Are you a visitor here?’ he asked.\n\n“I explained that I was and that I was a friend of Godfrey’s.\n\n“\u200a‘What a pity that he should be away on his travels, for he would\r\nhave so liked to see me,’ I continued.\n\n“\u200a‘Quite so. Exactly,’ said he with a rather guilty air. ‘No doubt\r\nyou will renew your visit at some more propitious time.’ He passed on,\r\nbut when I turned I observed that he was standing watching me,\r\nhalf-concealed by the laurels at the far end of the garden.\n\n“I had a good look at the little house as I passed it, but the\r\nwindows were heavily curtained, and, so far as one could see, it was\r\nempty. I might spoil my own game and even be ordered off the premises if\r\nI were too audacious, for I was still conscious that I was being\r\nwatched. Therefore, I strolled back to the house and waited for night\r\nbefore I went on with my inquiry. When all was dark and quiet I slipped\r\nout of my window and made my way as silently as possible to the\r\nmysterious lodge.\n\n“I have said that it was heavily curtained, but now I found that the\r\nwindows were shuttered as well. Some light, however, was breaking\r\nthrough one of them, so I concentrated my attention upon this. I was in\r\nluck, for the curtain had not been quite closed, and there was a crack\r\nin the shutter, so that I could see the inside of the room. It was a\r\ncheery place enough, a bright lamp and a blazing fire. Opposite to me\r\nwas seated the little man whom I had seen in the morning. He was smoking\r\na pipe and reading a paper.”\n\n“What paper?” I asked.\n\nMy client seemed annoyed at the interruption of his narrative.\n\n“Can it matter?” he asked.\n\n“It is most essential.”\n\n“I really took no notice.”\n\n“Possibly you observed whether it was a broad-leafed paper or of that\r\nsmaller type which one associates with weeklies.”\n\n“Now that you mention it, it was not large. It might have been the\r\nSpectator. However, I had little thought to spare upon such\r\ndetails, for a second man was seated with his back to the window, and I\r\ncould swear that this second man was Godfrey. I could not see his face,\r\nbut I knew the familiar slope of his shoulders. He was leaning upon his\r\nelbow in an attitude of great melancholy, his body turned towards the\r\nfire. I was hesitating as to what I should do when there was a sharp tap\r\non my shoulder, and there was Colonel Emsworth beside me.\n\n“\u200a‘This way, sir!’ said he in a low voice. He walked in silence to\r\nthe house, and I followed him into my own bedroom. He had picked up a\r\ntimetable in the hall.\n\n“\u200a‘There is a train to London at 8:30,’ said he. ‘The trap will be at\r\nthe door at eight.’\u200a”\n\nHe was white with rage, and, indeed, I felt myself in so difficult a\r\nposition that I could only stammer out a few incoherent apologies in\r\nwhich I tried to excuse myself by urging my anxiety for my friend.\n\n“\u200a‘The matter will not bear discussion,’ said he abruptly. ‘You have\r\nmade a most damnable intrusion into the privacy of our family. You were\r\nhere as a guest and you have become a spy. I have nothing more to say,\r\nsir, save that I have no wish ever to see you again.’\n\n“At this I lost my temper, Mr.\xa0Holmes, and I spoke with\r\nsome warmth.\n\n“\u200a‘I have seen your son, and I am convinced that for some reason of\r\nyour own you are concealing him from the world. I have no idea what your\r\nmotives are in cutting him off in this fashion, but I am sure that he is\r\nno longer a free agent. I warn you, Colonel Emsworth, that until I am\r\nassured as to the safety and well-being of my friend I shall never\r\ndesist in my efforts to get to the bottom of the mystery, and I shall\r\ncertainly not allow myself to be intimidated by anything which you may\r\nsay or do.’\n\n“The old fellow looked diabolical, and I really thought he was about\r\nto attack me. I have said that he was a gaunt, fierce old giant, and\r\nthough I am no weakling I might have been hard put to it to hold my own\r\nagainst him. However, after a long glare of rage he turned upon his heel\r\nand walked out of the room. For my part, I took the appointed train in\r\nthe morning, with the full intention of coming straight to you and\r\nasking for your advice and assistance at the appointment for which I had\r\nalready written.”\n\nSuch was the problem which my visitor laid before me. It presented,\r\nas the astute reader will have already perceived, few difficulties in\r\nits solution, for a very limited choice of alternatives must get to the\r\nroot of the matter. Still, elementary as it was, there were points of\r\ninterest and novelty about it which may excuse my placing it upon\r\nrecord. I now proceeded, using my familiar method of logical analysis,\r\nto narrow down the possible solutions.\n\n“The servants,” I asked; “how many were in the house?”\n\n“To the best of my belief there were only the old butler and his\r\nwife. They seemed to live in the simplest fashion.”\n\n“There was no servant, then, in the detached house?”\n\n“None, unless the little man with the beard acted as such. He seemed,\r\nhowever, to be quite a superior person.”\n\n“That seems very suggestive. Had you any indication that food was\r\nconveyed from the one house to the other?”\n\n“Now that you mention it, I did see old Ralph carrying a basket down\r\nthe garden walk and going in the direction of this house. The idea of\r\nfood did not occur to me at the moment.”\n\n“Did you make any local inquiries?”\n\n“Yes, I did. I spoke to the stationmaster and also to the innkeeper\r\nin the village. I simply asked if they knew anything of my old comrade,\r\nGodfrey Emsworth. Both of them assured me that he had gone for a voyage\r\nround the world. He had come home and then had almost at once started\r\noff again. The story was evidently universally accepted.”\n\n“You said nothing of your suspicions?”\n\n“Nothing.”\n\n“That was very wise. The matter should certainly be inquired into. I\r\nwill go back with you to Tuxbury Old Park.”\n\n“Today?”\n\nIt happened that at the moment I was clearing up the case which my\r\nfriend Watson has described as that of the Abbey School, in which the\r\nDuke of Greyminster was so deeply involved. I had also a commission from\r\nthe Sultan of Turkey which called for immediate action, as political\r\nconsequences of the gravest kind might arise from its neglect. Therefore\r\nit was not until the beginning of the next week, as my diary records,\r\nthat I was able to start forth on my mission to Bedfordshire in company\r\nwith Mr.\xa0James M. Dodd. As we drove to Eustonn we picked up\r\na grave and tacitum gentleman of iron-gray aspect, with whom I had made\r\nthe necessary arrangements.\n\n“This is an old friend,” said I to Dodd. “It is possible that his\r\npresence may be entirely unnecessary, and, on the other hand, it may be\r\nessential. It is not necessary at the present stage to go further into\r\nthe matter.”\n\nThe narratives of Watson have accustomed the reader, no doubt, to the\r\nfact that I do not waste words or disclose my thoughts while a case is\r\nactually under consideration. Dodd seemed surprised, but nothing more\r\nwas said, and the three of us continued our journey together. In the\r\ntrain I asked Dodd one more question which I wished our companion to\r\nhear.\n\n“You say that you saw your friend’s face quite clearly at the window,\r\nso clearly that you are sure of his identity?”\n\n“I have no doubt about it whatever. His nose was pressed against the\r\nglass. The lamplight shone full upon him.”\n\n“It could not have been someone resembling him?”\n\n“No, no, it was he.”\n\n“But you say he was changed?”\n\n“Only in colour. His face was\ufeff—how shall I describe it?\ufeff—it was of a\r\nfish-belly whiteness. It was bleached.”\n\n“Was it equally pale all over?”\n\n“I think not. It was his brow which I saw so clearly as it was\r\npressed against the window.”\n\n“Did you call to him?”\n\n“I was too startled and horrified for the moment. Then I pursued him,\r\nas I have told you, but without result.”\n\nMy case was practically complete, and there was only one small\r\nincident needed to round it off. When, after a considerable drive, we\r\narrived at the strange old rambling house which my client had described,\r\nit was Ralph, the elderly butler, who opened the door. I had\r\nrequisitioned the carriage for the day and had asked my elderly friend\r\nto remain within it unless we should summon him. Ralph, a little\r\nwrinkled old fellow, was in the conventional costume of black coat and\r\npepper-and-salt trousers, with only one curious variant. He wore brown\r\nleather gloves, which at sight of us he instantly shuffled off, laying\r\nthem down on the hall-table as we passed in. I have, as my friend Watson\r\nmay have remarked, an abnormally acute set of senses, and a faint but\r\nincisive scent was apparent. It seemed to centre on the hall table. I\r\nturned, placed my hat there, knocked it off, stooped to pick it up, and\r\ncontrived to bring my nose within a foot of the gloves. Yes, it was\r\nundoubtedly from them that the curious tarry odour was oozing. I passed\r\non into the study with my case complete. Alas, that I should have to\r\nshow my hand so when I tell my own story! It was by concealing such\r\nlinks in the chain that Watson was enabled to produce his meretricious\r\nfinales.\n\nColonel Emsworth was not in his room, but he came quickly enough on\r\nreceipt of Ralph’s message. We heard his quick, heavy step in the\r\npassage. The door was flung open and he rushed in with bristling beard\r\nand twisted features, as terrible an old man as ever I have seen. He\r\nheld our cards in his hand, and he tore them up and stamped on the\r\nfragments.\n\n“Have I not told you, you infernal busybody, that you are warned off\r\nthe premises? Never dare to show your damned face here again. If you\r\nenter again without my leave I shall be within my rights if I use\r\nviolence. I’ll shoot you, sir! By God, I will! As to you, sir,” turning\r\nupon me, “I extend the same warning to you. I am familiar with your\r\nignoble profession, but you must take your reputed talents to some other\r\nfield. There is no opening for them here.”\n\n“I cannot leave here,” said my client firmly, “until I hear from\r\nGodfrey’s own lips that he is under no restraint.”\n\nOur involuntary host rang the bell.\n\n“Ralph,” he said, “telephone down to the county police and ask the\r\ninspector to send up two constables. Tell him there are burglars in the\r\nhouse.”\n\n“One moment,” said I. “You must be aware, Mr.\xa0Dodd, that\r\nColonel Emsworth is within his rights and that we have no legal status\r\nwithin his house. On the other hand, he should recognize that your\r\naction is prompted entirely by solicitude for his son. I venture to hope\r\nthat if I were allowed to have five minutes conversation with Colonel\r\nEmsworth I could certainly alter his view of the matter.”\n\n“I am not so easily altered,” said the old soldier. “Ralph, do what I\r\nhave told you. What the devil are you waiting for? Ring up the\r\npolice!”\n\n“Nothing of the sort,” I said, putting my back to the door. “Any\r\npolice interference would bring about the very catastrophe which you\r\ndread.” I took out my notebook and scribbled one word upon a loose\r\nsheet. “That,” said I as I handed it to Colonel Emsworth, “is what has\r\nbrought us here.”\n\nHe stared at the writing with a face from which every expression save\r\namazement had vanished.\n\n“How do you know?” he gasped, sitting down heavily in his chair.\n\n“It is my business to know things. That is my trade.”\n\nHe sat in deep thought, his gaunt hand tugging at his straggling\r\nbeard. Then he made a gesture of resignation.\n\n“Well, if you wish to see Godfrey, you shall. It is no doing of mine,\r\nbut you have forced my hand. Ralph, tell Mr.\xa0Godfrey and\r\nMr.\xa0Kent that in five minutes we shall be with them.”\n\nAt the end of that time we passed down the garden path and found\r\nourselves in front of the mystery house at the end. A small bearded man\r\nstood at the door with a look of considerable astonishment upon his\r\nface.\n\n“This is very sudden, Colonel Emsworth,” said he. “This will\r\ndisarrange all our plans.”\n\n“I can’t help it, Mr.\xa0Kent. Our hands have been forced.\r\nCan Mr.\xa0Godfrey see us?”\n\n“Yes, he is waiting inside.” He turned and led us into a large\r\nplainly furnished front room. A man was standing with his back to the\r\nfire, and at the sight of him my client sprang forward with outstretched\r\nhand.\n\n“Why, Godfrey, old man, this is fine!”\n\nBut the other waved him back.\n\n“Don’t touch me, Jimmie. Keep your distance. Yes, you may well stare!\r\nI don’t quite look the smart Lance-Corporal Emsworth, of B Squadron, do\r\nI?”\n\nHis appearance was certainly extraordinary. One could see that he had\r\nindeed been a handsome man with clear-cut features sunburned by an\r\nAfrican sun, but mottled in patches over this darker surface were\r\ncurious whitish patches which had bleached his skin.\n\n“That’s why I don’t court visitors,” said he. “I don’t mind you,\r\nJimmie, but I could have done without your friend. I suppose there is\r\nsome good reason for it, but you have me at a disadvantage.”\n\n“I wanted to be sure that all was well with you, Godfrey. I saw you\r\nthat night when you looked into my window, and I could not let the\r\nmatter rest till I had cleared things up.”\n\n“Old Ralph told me you were there, and I couldn’t help taking a peep\r\nat you. I hoped you would not have seen me, and I had to run to my\r\nburrow when I heard the window go up.”\n\n“But what in heaven’s name is the matter?”\n\n“Well, it’s not a long story to tell,” said he, lighting a cigarette.\r\n“You remember that morning fight at Buffelsspruit, outside Pretoria, on\r\nthe Eastern railway line? You heard I was hit?”\n\n“Yes, I heard that but I never got particulars.”\n\n“Three of us got separated from the others. It was very broken\r\ncountry, you may remember. There was Simpson\ufeff—the fellow we called Baldy\r\nSimpson\ufeff—and Anderson, and I. We were clearing brother Boer, but he lay\r\nlow and got the three of us. The other two were killed. I got an\r\nelephant bullet through my shoulder. I stuck on to my horse, however,\r\nand he galloped several miles before I fainted and rolled off the\r\nsaddle.\n\n“When I came to myself it was nightfall, and I raised myself up,\r\nfeeling very weak and ill. To my surprise there was a house close beside\r\nme, a fairly large house with a broad stoep and many windows. It was\r\ndeadly cold. You remember the kind of numb cold which used to come at\r\nevening, a deadly, sickening sort of cold, very different from a crisp\r\nhealthy frost. Well, I was chilled to the bone, and my only hope seemed\r\nto lie in reaching that house. I staggered to my feet and dragged myself\r\nalong, hardly conscious of what I did. I have a dim memory of slowly\r\nascending the steps, entering a wide-opened door, passing into a large\r\nroom which contained several beds, and throwing myself down with a gasp\r\nof satisfaction upon one of them. It was unmade, but that troubled me\r\nnot at all. I drew the clothes over my shivering body and in a moment I\r\nwas in a deep sleep.\n\n“It was morning when I wakened, and it seemed to me that instead of\r\ncoming out into a world of sanity I had emerged into some extraordinary\r\nnightmare. The African sun flooded through the big, curtainless windows,\r\nand every detail of the great, bare, whitewashed dormitory stood out\r\nhard and clear. In front of me was standing a small, dwarf-like man with\r\na huge, bulbous head, who was jabbering excitedly in Dutch, waving two\r\nhorrible hands which looked to me like brown sponges. Behind him stood a\r\ngroup of people who seemed to be intensely amused by the situation, but\r\na chill came over me as I looked at them. Not one of them was a normal\r\nhuman being. Every one was twisted or swollen or disfigured in some\r\nstrange way. The laughter of these strange monstrosities was a dreadful\r\nthing to hear.\n\n“It seemed that none of them could speak English, but the situation\r\nwanted clearing up, for the creature with the big head was growing\r\nfuriously angry, and, uttering wild-beast cries, he had laid his\r\ndeformed hands upon me and was dragging me out of bed, regardless of the\r\nfresh flow of blood from my wound. The little monster was as strong as a\r\nbull, and I don’t know what he might have done to me had not an elderly\r\nman who was clearly in authority been attracted to the room by the\r\nhubbub; He said a few stern words in Dutch, and my persecutor shrank\r\naway. Then he turned upon me, gazing at me in the utmost amazement.\n\n“\u200a‘How in the world did you come here?’ he asked in amazement. ‘Wait\r\na bit! I see that you are tired out and that wounded shoulder of yours\r\nwants looking after. I am a doctor, and I’ll soon have you tied up. But,\r\nman alive! you are in far greater danger here than ever you were on the\r\nbattlefield. You are in the Leper Hospital, and you have slept in a\r\nleper’s bed.’\n\n“Need I tell you more, Jimmie? It seems that in view of the\r\napproaching battle all these poor creatures had been evacuated the day\r\nbefore. Then, as the British advanced, they had been brought back by\r\nthis, their medical superintendent, who assured me that, though he\r\nbelieved he was immune to the disease, he would none the less never have\r\ndared to do what I had done. He put me in a private room, treated me\r\nkindly, and within a week or so I was removed to the general hospital at\r\nPretoria.\n\n“So there you have my tragedy. I hoped against hope, but it was not\r\nuntil I had reached home that the terrible signs which you see upon my\r\nface told me that I had not escaped. What was I to do? I was in this\r\nlonely house. We had two servants whom we could utterly trust. There was\r\na house where I could live. Under pledge of secrecy,\r\nMr.\xa0Kent, who is a surgeon, was prepared to stay with me.\r\nIt seemed simple enough on those lines. The alternative was a dreadful\r\none\ufeff—segregation for life among strangers with never a hope of release.\r\nBut absolute secrecy was necessary, or even in this quiet countryside\r\nthere would have been an outcry, and I should have been dragged to my\r\nhorrible doom. Even you, Jimmie\ufeff—even you had to be kept in the dark. Why\r\nmy father has relented I cannot imagine.”\n\nColonel Emsworth pointed to me.\n\n“This is the gentleman who forced my hand.” He unfolded the scrap of\r\npaper on which I had written the word “Leprosy.” “It seemed to me that\r\nif he knew so much as that it was safer that he should know all.”\n\n“And so it was,” said I. “Who knows but good may come of it? I\r\nunderstand that only Mr.\xa0Kent has seen the patient. May I\r\nask, sir, if you are an authority on such complaints, which are, I\r\nunderstand, tropical or semitropical in their nature?”\n\n“I have the ordinary knowledge of the educated medical man,” he\r\nobserved with some stiffness.\n\n“I have no doubt, sir, that you are fully competent, but I am sure\r\nthat you will agree that in such a case a second opinion is valuable.\r\nYou have avoided this, I understand, for fear that pressure should be\r\nput upon you to segregate the patient.”\n\n“That is so,” said Colonel Emsworth.\n\n“I foresaw this situation,” I explained, “and I have brought with me\r\na friend whose discretion may absolutely be trusted. I was able once to\r\ndo him a professional service, and he is ready to advise as a friend\r\nrather than as a specialist. His name is Sir James Saunders.”\n\nThe prospect of an interview with Lord Roberts would not have excited\r\ngreater wonder and pleasure in a raw subaltern than was now reflected\r\nupon the face of Mr.\xa0Kent.\n\n“I shall indeed be proud,” he murmured.\n\n“Then I will ask Sir James to step this way. He is at present in the\r\ncarriage outside the door. Meanwhile, Colonel Emsworth, we may perhaps\r\nassemble in your study, where I could give the necessary\r\nexplanations.”\n\nAnd here it is that I miss my Watson. By cunning questions and\r\nejaculations of wonder he could elevate my simple art, which is but\r\nsystematized common sense, into a prodigy. When I tell my own story I\r\nhave no such aid. And yet I will give my process of thought even as I\r\ngave it to my small audience, which included Godfrey’s mother in the\r\nstudy of Colonel Emsworth.\n\n“That process,” said I, “starts upon the supposition that when you\r\nhave eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however\r\nimprobable, must be the truth. It may well be that several explanations\r\nremain, in which case one tries test after test until one or other of\r\nthem has a convincing amount of support. We will now apply this\r\nprinciple to the case in point. As it was first presented to me, there\r\nwere three possible explanations of the seclusion or incarceration of\r\nthis gentleman in an outhouse of his father’s mansion. There was the\r\nexplanation that he was in hiding for a crime, or that he was mad and\r\nthat they wished to avoid an asylum, or that he had some disease which\r\ncaused his segregation. I could think of no other adequate solutions.\r\nThese, then, had to be sifted and balanced against each other.\n\n“The criminal solution would not bear inspection. No unsolved crime\r\nhad been reported from that district. I was sure of that. If it were\r\nsome crime not yet discovered, then clearly it would be to the interest\r\nof the family to get rid of the delinquent and send him abroad rather\r\nthan keep him concealed at home. I could see no explanation for such a\r\nline of conduct.\n\n“Insanity was more plausible. The presence of the second person in\r\nthe outhouse suggested a keeper. The fact that he locked the door when\r\nhe came out strengthened the supposition and gave the idea of\r\nconstraint. On the other hand, this constraint could not be severe or\r\nthe young man could not have got loose and come down to have a look at\r\nhis friend. You will remember, Mr.\xa0Dodd, that I felt round\r\nfor points, asking you, for example, about the paper which\r\nMr.\xa0Kent was reading. Had it been the Lancet or\r\nthe British Medical Journal it would have helped me. It is not\r\nillegal, however, to keep a lunatic upon private premises so long as\r\nthere is a qualified person in attendance and that the authorities have\r\nbeen duly notified. Why, then, all this desperate desire for secrecy?\r\nOnce again I could not get the theory to fit the facts.\n\n“There remained the third possibility, into which, rare and unlikely\r\nas it was, everything seemed to fit. Leprosy is not uncommon in South\r\nAfrica. By some extraordinary chance this youth might have contracted\r\nit. His people would be placed in a very dreadful position, since they\r\nwould desire to save him from segregation. Great secrecy would be needed\r\nto prevent rumours from getting about and subsequent interference by the\r\nauthorities. A devoted medical man, if sufficiently paid, would easily\r\nbe found to take charge of the sufferer. There would be no reason why\r\nthe latter should not be allowed freedom after dark. Bleaching of the\r\nskin is a common result of the disease. The case was a strong one\ufeff—so\r\nstrong that I determined to act as if it were actually proved. When on\r\narriving here I noticed that Ralph, who carries out the meals, had\r\ngloves which are impregnated with disinfectants, my last doubts were\r\nremoved. A single word showed you, sir, that your secret was discovered,\r\nand if I wrote rather than said it, it was to prove to you that my\r\ndiscretion was to be trusted.”\n\nI was finishing this little analysis of the case when the door was\r\nopened and the austere figure of the great dermatologist was ushered in.\r\nBut for once his sphinx-like features had relaxed and there was a warm\r\nhumanity in his eyes. He strode up to Colonel Emsworth and shook him by\r\nthe hand.\n\n“It is often my lot to bring ill-tidings and seldom good,” said he.\r\n“This occasion is the more welcome. It is not leprosy.”\n\n“What?”\n\n“A well-marked case of pseudo-leprosy or ichthyosis, a scalelike\r\naffection of the skin, unsightly, obstinate, but possibly curable, and\r\ncertainly noninfective. Yes, Mr.\xa0Holmes, the coincidence is\r\na remarkable one. But is it coincidence? Are there not subtle forces at\r\nwork of which we know little? Are we assured that the apprehension from\r\nwhich this young man has no doubt suffered terribly since his exposure\r\nto its contagion may not produce a physical effect which simulates that\r\nwhich it fears? At any rate, I pledge my professional reputation\ufeff—But the\r\nlady has fainted! I think that Mr.\xa0Kent had better be with\r\nher until she recovers from this joyous shock.”\n\nThe Adventure of the Mazarin Stone\n\nIt was pleasant to Dr.\xa0Watson to find himself once more\r\nin the untidy room of the first floor in Baker Street which had been the\r\nstarting-point of so many remarkable adventures. He looked round him at\r\nthe scientific charts upon the wall, the acid-charred bench of\r\nchemicals, the violin-case leaning in the corner, the coal-scuttle,\r\nwhich contained of old the pipes and tobacco. Finally, his eyes came\r\nround to the fresh and smiling face of Billy, the young but very wise\r\nand tactful page, who had helped a little to fill up the gap of\r\nloneliness and isolation which surrounded the saturnine figure of the\r\ngreat detective.\n\n“It all seems very unchanged, Billy. You don’t change, either. I hope\r\nthe same can be said of him?”\n\nBilly glanced with some solicitude at the closed door of the\r\nbedroom.\n\n“I think he’s in bed and asleep,” he said.\n\nIt was seven in the evening of a lovely summer’s day, but\r\nDr.\xa0Watson was sufficiently familiar with the irregularity\r\nof his old friend’s hours to feel no surprise at the idea.\n\n“That means a case, I suppose?”\n\n“Yes, sir, he is very hard at it just now. I’m frightened for his\r\nhealth. He gets paler and thinner, and he eats nothing. ‘When will you\r\nbe pleased to dine, Mr.\xa0Holmes?’ Mrs.\xa0Hudson\r\nasked. ‘Seven-thirty, the day after tomorrow,’ said he. You know his way\r\nwhen he is keen on a case.”\n\n“Yes, Billy, I know.”\n\n“He’s following someone. Yesterday he was out as a workman looking\r\nfor a job. Today he was an old woman. Fairly took me in, he did, and I\r\nought to know his ways by now.” Billy pointed with a grin to a very\r\nbaggy parasol which leaned against the sofa. “That’s part of the old\r\nwoman’s outfit,” he said.\n\n“But what is it all about, Billy?”\n\nBilly sank his voice, as one who discusses great secrets of State. “I\r\ndon’t mind telling you, sir, but it should go no farther. It’s this case\r\nof the Crown diamond.”\n\n“What\ufeff—the hundred-thousand-pound burglary?”\n\n“Yes, sir. They must get it back, sir. Why, we had the Prime Minister\r\nand the Home Secretary both sitting on that very sofa.\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes was very nice to them. He soon put them at their\r\nease and promised he would do all he could. Then there is Lord\r\nCantlemere\ufeff—”\n\n“Ah!”\n\n“Yes, sir, you know what that means. He’s a stiff’un, sir, if I may\r\nsay so. I can get along with the Prime Minister, and I’ve nothing\r\nagainst the Home Secretary, who seemed a civil, obliging sort of man,\r\nbut I can’t stand his Lordship. Neither can Mr.\xa0Holmes,\r\nsir. You see, he don’t believe in Mr.\xa0Holmes and he was\r\nagainst employing him. He’d rather he failed.”\n\n“And Mr.\xa0Holmes knows it?”\n\n“Mr.\xa0Holmes always knows whatever there is to know.”\n\n“Well, we’ll hope he won’t fail and that Lord Cantlemere will be\r\nconfounded. But I say, Billy, what is that curtain for across the\r\nwindow?”\n\n“Mr.\xa0Holmes had it put up there three days ago. We’ve\r\ngot something funny behind it.”\n\nBilly advanced and drew away the drapery which screened the alcove of\r\nthe bow window.\n\nDr.\xa0Watson could not restrain a cry of amazement. There\r\nwas a facsimile of his old friend, dressing-gown and all, the face\r\nturned three-quarters towards the window and downward, as though reading\r\nan invisible book, while the body was sunk deep in an armchair. Billy\r\ndetached the head and held it in the air.\n\n“We put it at different angles, so that it may seem more lifelike. I\r\nwouldn’t dare touch it if the blind were not down. But when it’s up you\r\ncan see this from across the way.”\n\n“We used something of the sort once before.”\n\n“Before my time,” said Billy. He drew the window curtains apart and\r\nlooked out into the street. “There are folk who watch us from over\r\nyonder. I can see a fellow now at the window. Have a look for\r\nyourself.”\n\nWatson had taken a step forward when the bedroom door opened, and the\r\nlong, thin form of Holmes emerged, his face pale and drawn, but his step\r\nand bearing as active as ever. With a single spring he was at the\r\nwindow, and had drawn the blind once more.\n\n“That will do, Billy,” said he. “You were in danger of your life\r\nthen, my boy, and I can’t do without you just yet. Well, Watson, it is\r\ngood to see you in your old quarters once again. You come at a critical\r\nmoment.”\n\n“So I gather.”\n\n“You can go, Billy. That boy is a problem, Watson. How far am I\r\njustified in allowing him to be in danger?”\n\n“Danger of what, Holmes?”\n\n“Of sudden death. I’m expecting something this evening.”\n\n“Expecting what?”\n\n“To be murdered, Watson.”\n\n“No, no, you are joking, Holmes!”\n\n“Even my limited sense of humour could evolve a better joke than\r\nthat. But we may be comfortable in the meantime, may we not? Is alcohol\r\npermitted? The gasogene and cigars are in the old place. Let me see you\r\nonce more in the customary armchair. You have not, I hope, learned to\r\ndespise my pipe and my lamentable tobacco? It has to take the place of\r\nfood these days.”\n\n“But why not eat?”\n\n“Because the faculties become refined when you starve them. Why,\r\nsurely, as a doctor, my dear Watson, you must admit that what your\r\ndigestion gains in the way of blood supply is so much lost to the brain.\r\nI am a brain, Watson. The rest of me is a mere appendix. Therefore, it\r\nis the brain I must consider.”\n\n“But this danger, Holmes?”\n\n“Ah, yes, in case it should come off, it would perhaps be as well\r\nthat you should burden your memory with the name and address of the\r\nmurderer. You can give it to Scotland Yard, with my love and a parting\r\nblessing. Sylvius is the name\ufeff—Count Negretto Sylvius. Write it down,\r\nman, write it down! 136 Moorside Gardens, N. W. Got it?”\n\nWatson’s honest face was twitching with anxiety. He knew only too\r\nwell the immense risks taken by Holmes and was well aware that what he\r\nsaid was more likely to be understatement than exaggeration. Watson was\r\nalways the man of action, and he rose to the occasion.\n\n“Count me in, Holmes. I have nothing to do for a day or two.”\n\n“Your morals don’t improve, Watson. You have added fibbing to your\r\nother vices. You bear every sign of the busy medical man, with calls on\r\nhim every hour.”\n\n“Not such important ones. But can’t you have this fellow\r\narrested?”\n\n“Yes, Watson, I could. That’s what worries him so.”\n\n“But why don’t you?”\n\n“Because I don’t know where the diamond is.”\n\n“Ah! Billy told me\ufeff—the missing Crown jewel!”\n\n“Yes, the great yellow Mazarin stone. I’ve cast my net and I have my\r\nfish. But I have not got the stone. What is the use of taking\r\nthem? We can make the world a better place by laying them by\r\nthe heels. But that is not what I am out for. It’s the stone I\r\nwant.”\n\n“And is this Count Sylvius one of your fish?”\n\n“Yes, and he’s a shark. He bites. The other is Sam Merton the boxer.\r\nNot a bad fellow, Sam, but the Count has used him. Sam’s not a shark. He\r\nis a great big silly bullheaded gudgeon. But he is flopping about in my\r\nnet all the same.”\n\n“Where is this Count Sylvius?”\n\n“I’ve been at his very elbow all the morning. You’ve seen me as an\r\nold lady, Watson. I was never more convincing. He actually picked up my\r\nparasol for me once. ‘By your leave, madame,’ said he\ufeff—half-ltalian, you\r\nknow, and with the Southern graces of manner when in the mood, but a\r\ndevil incarnate in the other mood. Life is full of whimsical happenings,\r\nWatson.”\n\n“It might have been tragedy.”\n\n“Well, perhaps it might. I followed him to old Straubenzee’s workshop\r\nin the Minories. Straubenzee made the airgun\ufeff—a very pretty bit of work,\r\nas I understand, and I rather fancy it is in the opposite window at the\r\npresent moment. Have you seen the dummy? Of course, Billy showed it to\r\nyou. Well, it may get a bullet through its beautiful head at any moment.\r\nAh, Billy, what is it?”\n\nThe boy had reappeared in the room with a card upon a tray. Holmes\r\nglanced at it with raised eyebrows and an amused smile.\n\n“The man himself. I had hardly expected this. Grasp the nettle,\r\nWatson! A man of nerve. Possibly you have heard of his reputation as a\r\nshooter of big game. It would indeed be a triumphant ending to his\r\nexcellent sporting record if he added me to his bag. This is a proof\r\nthat he feels my toe very close behind his heel.”\n\n“Send for the police.”\n\n“I probably shall. But not just yet. Would you glance carefully out\r\nof the window, Watson, and see if anyone is hanging about in the\r\nstreet?”\n\nWatson looked warily round the edge of the curtain.\n\n“Yes, there is one rough fellow near the door.”\n\n“That will be Sam Merton\ufeff—the faithful but rather fatuous Sam. Where\r\nis this gentleman, Billy?”\n\n“In the waiting-room, sir.”\n\n“Show him up when I ring.”\n\n“Yes, sir.”\n\n“If I am not in the room, show him in all the same.”\n\n“Yes, sir.”\n\nWatson waited until the door was closed, and then he turned earnestly\r\nto his companion.\n\n“Look here, Holmes, this is simply impossible. This is a desperate\r\nman, who sticks at nothing. He may have come to murder you.”\n\n“I should not be surprised.”\n\n“I insist upon staying with you.”\n\n“You would be horribly in the way.”\n\n“In his way?”\n\n“No, my dear fellow\ufeff—in my way.”\n\n“Well, I can’t possibly leave you.”\n\n“Yes, you can, Watson. And you will, for you have never failed to\r\nplay the game. I am sure you will play it to the end. This man has come\r\nfor his own purpose, but he may stay for mine.”\n\nHolmes took out his notebook and scribbled a few lines. “Take a cab\r\nto Scotland Yard and give this to Youghal of the C. I. D. Come back with\r\nthe police. The fellow’s arrest will follow.”\n\n“I’ll do that with joy.”\n\n“Before you return I may have just time enough to find out where the\r\nstone is.” He touched the bell. “I think we will go out through the\r\nbedroom. This second exit is exceedingly useful. I rather want to see my\r\nshark without his seeing me, and I have, as you will remember, my own\r\nway of doing it.”\n\nIt was, therefore, an empty room into which Billy, a minute later,\r\nushered Count Sylvius. The famous game-shot, sportsman, and\r\nman-about-town was a big, swarthy fellow, with a formidable dark\r\nmoustache shading a cruel, thin-lipped mouth, and surmounted by a long,\r\ncurved nose like the beak of an eagle. He was well dressed, but his\r\nbrilliant necktie, shining pin, and glittering rings were flamboyant in\r\ntheir effect. As the door closed behind him he looked round him with\r\nfierce, startled eyes, like one who suspects a trap at every turn. Then\r\nhe gave a violent start as he saw the impassive head and the collar of\r\nthe dressing-gown which projected above the armchair in the window. At\r\nfirst his expression was one of pure amazement. Then the light of a\r\nhorrible hope gleamed in his dark, murderous eyes. He took one more\r\nglance round to see that there were no witnesses, and then, on tiptoe,\r\nhis thick stick half raised, he approached the silent figure. He was\r\ncrouching for his final spring and blow when a cool, sardonic voice\r\ngreeted him from the open bedroom door:\n\n“Don’t break it, Count! Don’t break it!”\n\nThe assassin staggered back, amazement in his convulsed face. For an\r\ninstant he half raised his loaded cane once more, as if he would turn\r\nhis violence from the effigy to the original; but there was something in\r\nthat steady gray eye and mocking smile which caused his hand to sink to\r\nhis side.\n\n“It’s a pretty little thing,” said Holmes, advancing towards the\r\nimage. “Tavernier, the French modeller, made it. He is as good at\r\nwaxworks as your friend Straubenzee is at airguns.”\n\n“Airguns, sir! What do you mean?”\n\n“Put your hat and stick on the side-table. Thank you! Pray take a\r\nseat. Would you care to put your revolver out also? Oh, very good, if\r\nyou prefer to sit upon it. Your visit is really most opportune, for I\r\nwanted badly to have a few minutes’ chat with you.”\n\nThe Count scowled, with heavy, threatening eyebrows.\n\n“I, too, wished to have some words with you, Holmes. That is why I am\r\nhere. I won’t deny that I intended to assault you just now.”\n\nHolmes swung his leg on the edge of the table.\n\n“I rather gathered that you had some idea of the sort in your head,”\r\nsaid he. “But why these personal attentions?”\n\n“Because you have gone out of your way to annoy me. Because you have\r\nput your creatures upon my track.”\n\n“My creatures! I assure you no!”\n\n“Nonsense! I have had them followed. Two can play at that game,\r\nHolmes.”\n\n“It is a small point, Count Sylvius, but perhaps you would kindly\r\ngive me my prefix when you address me. You can understand that, with my\r\nroutine of work, I should find myself on familiar terms with half the\r\nrogues’ gallery, and you will agree that exceptions are invidious.”\n\n“Well, Mr.\xa0Holmes, then.”\n\n“Excellent! But I assure you you are mistaken about my alleged\r\nagents.”\n\nCount Sylvius laughed contemptuously.\n\n“Other people can observe as well as you. Yesterday there was an old\r\nsporting man. Today it was an elderly woman. They held me in view all\r\nday.”\n\n“Really, sir, you compliment me. Old Baron Dowson said the night\r\nbefore he was hanged that in my case what the law had gained the stage\r\nhad lost. And now you give my little impersonations your kindly\r\npraise?”\n\n“It was you\ufeff—you yourself?”\n\nHolmes shrugged his shoulders. “You can see in the corner the parasol\r\nwhich you so politely handed to me in the Minories before you began to\r\nsuspect.”\n\n“If I had known, you might never\ufeff—”\n\n“Have seen this humble home again. I was well aware of it. We all\r\nhave neglected opportunities to deplore. As it happens, you did not\r\nknow, so here we are!”\n\nThe Count’s knotted brows gathered more heavily over his menacing\r\neyes. “What you say only makes the matter worse. It was not your agents\r\nbut your playacting, busybody self! You admit that you have dogged me.\r\nWhy?”\n\n“Come now, Count. You used to shoot lions in Algeria.”\n\n“Well?”\n\n“But why?”\n\n“Why? The sport\ufeff—the excitement\ufeff—the danger!”\n\n“And, no doubt, to free the country from a pest?”\n\n“Exactly!”\n\n“My reasons in a nutshell!”\n\nThe Count sprang to his feet, and his hand involuntarily moved back\r\nto his hip-pocket.\n\n“Sit down, sir, sit down! There was another, more practical, reason.\r\nI want that yellow diamond!”\n\nCount Sylvius lay back in his chair with an evil smile.\n\n“Upon my word!” said he.\n\n“You knew that I was after you for that. The real reason why you are\r\nhere tonight is to find out how much I know about the matter and how far\r\nmy removal is absolutely essential. Well, I should say that, from your\r\npoint of view, it is absolutely essential, for I know all about it, save\r\nonly one thing, which you are about to tell me.”\n\n“Oh, indeed! And pray, what is this missing fact?”\n\n“Where the Crown diamond now is.”\n\nThe Count looked sharply at his companion. “Oh, you want to know\r\nthat, do you? How the devil should I be able to lell you where it\r\nis?”\n\n“You can, and you will.”\n\n“Indeed!”\n\n“You can’t bluff me, Count Sylvius.” Holmes’s eyes, as he gazed at\r\nhim, contracted and lightened until they were like two menacing points\r\nof steel. “You are absolute plate-glass. I see to the very back of your\r\nmind.”\n\n“Then, of course, you see where the diamond is!”\n\nHolmes clapped his hands with amusement, and then pointed a derisive\r\nfinger. “Then you do know. You have admitted it!”\n\n“I admit nothing.”\n\n“Now, Count, if you will be reasonable we can do business. If not,\r\nyou will get hurt.”\n\nCount Sylvius threw up his eyes to the ceiling. “And you talk about\r\nbluff!” said he.\n\nHolmes looked at him thoughtfully like a master chess-player who\r\nmeditates his crowning move. Then he threw open the table drawer and\r\ndrew out a squat notebook.\n\n“Do you know what I keep in this book?”\n\n“No, sir, I do not!”\n\n“You!”\n\n“Me!”\n\n“Yes, sir, you! You are all here\ufeff—every action of your vile\r\nand dangerous life.”\n\n“Damn you, Holmes!” cried the Count with blazing eyes. “There are\r\nlimits to my patience!”\n\n“It’s all here, Count. The real facts as to the death of old\r\nMrs.\xa0Harold, who left you the Blymer estate, which you so\r\nrapidly gambled away.”\n\n“You are dreaming!”\n\n“And the complete life history of Miss Minnie Warrender.”\n\n“Tut! You will make nothing of that!”\n\n“Plenty more here, Count. Here is the robbery in the train deluxe to\r\nthe Riviera on February 13, 1892. Here is the forged check in the same\r\nyear on the Credit Lyonnais.”\n\n“No, you’re wrong there.”\n\n“Then I am right on the others! Now, Count, you are a card-player.\r\nWhen the other fellow has all the trumps, it saves time to throw down\r\nyour hand.”\n\n“What has all this talk to do with the jewel of which you spoke?”\n\n“Gently, Count. Restrain that eager mind! Let me get to the points in\r\nmy own humdrum fashion. I have all this against you; but, above all, I\r\nhave a clear case against both you and your fighting bully in the case\r\nof the Crown diamond.”\n\n“Indeed!”\n\n“I have the cabman who took you to Whitehall and the cabman who\r\nbrought you away. I have the commissionaire who saw you near the case. I\r\nhave Ikey Sanders, who refused to cut it up for you. Ikey has peached,\r\nand the game is up.”\n\nThe veins stood out on the Count’s forehead. His dark, hairy hands\r\nwere clenched in a convulsion of restrained emotion. He tried to speak,\r\nbut the words would not shape themselves.\n\n“That’s the hand I play from,” said Holmes. “I put it all upon the\r\ntable. But one card is missing. It’s the king of diamonds. I don’t know\r\nwhere the stone is.”\n\n“You never shall know.”\n\n“No? Now, be reasonable, Count. Consider the situation. You are going\r\nto be locked up for twenty years. So is Sam Merton. What good are you\r\ngoing to get out of your diamond? None in the world. But if you hand it\r\nover\ufeff—well, I’ll compound a felony. We don’t want you or Sam. We want the\r\nstone. Give that up, and so far as I am concerned you can go free so\r\nlong as you behave yourself in the future. If you make another slip\r\nwell, it will be the last. But this time my commission is to get the\r\nstone, not you.”\n\n“But if I refuse?”\n\n“Why, then\ufeff—alas!\ufeff—it must be you and not the stone.”\n\nBilly had appeared in answer to a ring.\n\n“I think, Count, that it would be as well to have your friend Sam at\r\nthis conference. After all, his interests should be represented. Billy,\r\nyou will see a large and ugly gentleman outside the front door. Ask him\r\nto come up.”\n\n“If he won’t come, sir?”\n\n“No violence, Billy. Don’t be rough with him. If you tell him that\r\nCount Sylvius wants him he will certainly come.”\n\n“What are you going to do now?” asked the Count as Billy\r\ndisappeared.\n\n“My friend Watson was with me just now. I told him that I had a shark\r\nand a gudgeon in my net; now I am drawing the net and up they come\r\ntogether.”\n\nThe Count had risen from his chair, and his hand was behind his back.\r\nHolmes held something half protruding from the pocket of his\r\ndressing-gown.\n\n“You won’t die in your bed, Holmes.”\n\n“I have often had the same idea. Does it matter very much? After all,\r\nCount, your own exit is more likely to be perpendicular than horizontal.\r\nBut these anticipations of the future are morbid. Why not give ourselves\r\nup to the unrestrained enjoyment of the present?”\n\nA sudden wild-beast light sprang up in the dark, menacing eyes of the\r\nmaster criminal. Holmes’s figure seemed to grow taller as he grew tense\r\nand ready.\n\n“It is no use your fingering your revolver, my friend,” he said in a\r\nquiet voice. “You know perfectly well that you dare not use it, even if\r\nI gave you time to draw it. Nasty, noisy things, revolvers, Count.\r\nBetter stick to airguns. Ah! I think I hear the fairy footstep of your\r\nestimable partner. Good day, Mr.\xa0Merton. Rather dull in the\r\nstreet, is it not?”\n\nThe prizefighter, a heavily built young man with a stupid, obstinate,\r\nslab-sided face, stood awkwardly at the door, looking about him with a\r\npuzzled expression. Holmes’s debonair manner was a new experience, and\r\nthough he vaguely felt that it was hostile, he did not know how to\r\ncounter it. He turned to his more astute comrade for help.\n\n“What’s the game now, Count? What’s this fellow want? What’s up?” His\r\nvoice was deep and raucous.\n\nThe Count shrugged his shoulders, and it was Holmes who answered.\n\n“If I may put it in a nutshell, Mr.\xa0Merton, I should say\r\nit was all up.”\n\nThe boxer still addressed his remarks to his associate.\n\n“Is this cove trying to be funny, or what? I’m not in the funny mood\r\nmyself.”\n\n“No, I expect not,” said Holmes. “I think I can promise you that you\r\nwill feel even less humorous as the evening advances. Now, look here,\r\nCount Sylvius. I’m a busy man and I can’t waste time. I’m going into\r\nthat bedroom. Pray make yourselves quite at home in my absence. You can\r\nexplain to your friend how the matter lies without the restraint of my\r\npresence. I shall try over the Hoffman ‘Barcarole’ upon my violin. In\r\nfive minutes I shall return for your final answer. You quite grasp the\r\nalternative, do you not? Shall we take you, or shall we have the\r\nstone?”\n\nHolmes withdrew, picking up his violin from the corner as he passed.\r\nA few moments later the long-drawn, wailing notes of that most haunting\r\nof tunes came faintly through the closed door of the bedroom.\n\n“What is it, then?” asked Merton anxiously as his companion turned to\r\nhim. “Does he know about the stone?”\n\n“He knows a damned sight too much about it. I’m not sure that he\r\ndoesn’t know all about it.”\n\n“Good Lord!” The boxer’s sallow face turned a shade whiter.\n\n“Ikey Sanders has split on us.”\n\n“He has, has he? I’ll do him down a thick ’un for that if I swing for\r\nit.”\n\n“That won’t help us much. We’ve got to make up our minds what to\r\ndo.”\n\n“Half a mo’,” said the boxer, looking suspiciously at the bedroom\r\ndoor. “He’s a leary cove that wants watching. I suppose he’s not\r\nlistening?”\n\n“How can he be listening with that music going?”\n\n“That’s right. Maybe somebody’s behind a curtain. Too many curtains\r\nin this room.” As he looked round he suddenly saw for the first time the\r\neffigy in the window, and stood staring and pointing, too amazed for\r\nwords.\n\n“Tut! it’s only a dummy,” said the Count.\n\n“A fake, is it? Well, strike me! Madame Tussaud ain’t in it. It’s the\r\nliving spit of him, gown and all. But them curtains Count!”\n\n“Oh, confound the curtains! We are wasting our time, and there is\r\nnone too much. He can lag us over this stone.”\n\n“The deuce he can!”\n\n“But he’ll let us slip if we only tell him where the swag is.”\n\n“What! Give it up? Give up a hundred thousand quid?”\n\n“It’s one or the other.”\n\nMerton scratched his short-cropped pate.\n\n“He’s alone in there. Let’s do him in. If his light were out we\r\nshould have nothing to fear.”\n\nThe Count shook his head.\n\n“He is armed and ready. If we shot him we could hardly get away in a\r\nplace like this. Besides, it’s likely enough that the police know\r\nwhatever evidence he has got. Hallo! What was that?”\n\nThere was a vague sound which seemed to come from the window. Both\r\nmen sprang round, but all was quiet. Save for the one strange figure\r\nseated in the chair, the room was certainly empty.\n\n“Something in the street,” said Merton. “Now look here, guv’nor,\r\nyou’ve got the brains. Surely you can think a way out of it. If slugging\r\nis no use then it’s up to you.”\n\n“I’ve fooled better men than he,” the Count answered. “The stone is\r\nhere in my secret pocket. I take no chances leaving it about. It can be\r\nout of England tonight and cut into four pieces in Amsterdam before\r\nSunday. He knows nothing of Van Seddar.”\n\n“I thought Van Seddar was going next week.”\n\n“He was. But now he must get off by the next boat. One or\r\nother of us must slip round with the stone to Lime Street and tell\r\nhim.”\n\n“But the false bottom ain’t ready.”\n\n“Well, he must take it as it is and chance it. There’s not a moment\r\nto lose.” Again, with the sense of danger which becomes an instinct with\r\nthe sportsman, he paused and looked hard at the window. Yes, it was\r\nsurely from the street that the faint sound had come.\n\n“As to Holmes,” he continued, “we can fool him easily enough. You\r\nsee, the damned fool won’t arrest us if he can get the stone. Well,\r\nwe’ll promise him the stone. We’ll put him on the wrong track about it,\r\nand before he finds that it is the wrong track it will be in Holland and\r\nwe out of the country.”\n\n“That sounds good to me!” cried Sam Merton with a grin.\n\n“You go on and tell the Dutchman to get a move on him. I’ll see this\r\nsucker and fill him up with a bogus confession. I’ll tell him that the\r\nstone is in Liverpool. Confound that whining music; it gets on my\r\nnerves! By the time he finds it isn’t in Liverpool it will be in\r\nquarters and we on the blue water. Come back here, out of a line with\r\nthat keyhole. Here is the stone.”\n\n“I wonder you dare carry it.”\n\n“Where could I have it safer? If we could take it out of Whitehall\r\nsomeone else could surely take it out of my lodgings.”\n\n“Let’s have a look at it.”\n\nCount Sylvius cast a somewhat unflattering glance at his associate\r\nand disregarded the unwashed hand which was extended towards him.\n\n“What\ufeff—d’ye think I’m going to snatch it off you? See here, mister,\r\nI’m getting a bit tired of your ways.”\n\n“Well, well, no offence, Sam. We can’t afford to quarrel. Come over\r\nto the window if you want to see the beauty properly. Now hold it to the\r\nlight! Here!”\n\n“Thank you!”\n\nWith a single spring Holmes had leaped from the dummy’s chair and had\r\ngrasped the precious jewel. He held it now in one hand, while his other\r\npointed a revolver at the Count’s head. The two villains staggered back\r\nin utter amazement. Before they had recovered Holmes had pressed the\r\nelectric bell.\n\n“No violence, gentlemen\ufeff—no violence, I beg of you! Consider the\r\nfurniture! It must be very clear to you that your position is an\r\nimpossible one. The police are waiting below.”\n\nThe Count’s bewilderment overmastered his rage and fear.\n\n“But how the deuce\ufeff—?” he gasped.\n\n“Your surprise is very natural. You are not aware that a second door\r\nfrom my bedroom leads behind that curtain. I fancied that you must have\r\nheard me when I displaced the figure, but luck was on my side. It gave\r\nme a chance of listening to your racy conversation which would have been\r\npainfully constrained had you been aware of my presence.”\n\nThe Count gave a gesture of resignation.\n\n“We give you best, Holmes. I believe you are the devil himself.”\n\n“Not far from him, at any rate,” Holmes answered with a polite\r\nsmile.\n\nSam Merton’s slow intellect had only gradually appreciated the\r\nsituation. Now, as the sound of heavy steps came from the stairs\r\noutside, he broke silence at last.\n\n“A fair cop!” said he. “But, I say, what about that bloomin’ fiddle!\r\nI hear it yet.”\n\n“Tut, tut!” Holmes answered. “You are perfectly right. Let it play!\r\nThese modern gramophones are a remarkable invention.”\n\nThere was an inrush of police, the handcuffs clicked and the\r\ncriminals were led to the waiting cab. Watson lingered with Holmes,\r\ncongratulating him upon this fresh leaf added to his laurels. Once more\r\ntheir conversation was interrupted by the imperturbable Billy with his\r\ncard-tray.\n\n“Lord Cantlemere sir.”\n\n“Show him up, Billy. This is the eminent peer who represents the very\r\nhighest interests,” said Holmes. “He is an excellent and loyal person,\r\nbut rather of the old regime. Shall we make him unbend? Dare we venture\r\nupon a slight liberty? He knows, we may conjecture, nothing of what has\r\noccurred.”\n\nThe door opened to admit a thin, austere figure with a hatchet face\r\nand drooping mid-Victorian whiskers of a glossy blackness which hardly\r\ncorresponded with the rounded shoulders and feeble gait. Holmes advanced\r\naffably, and shook an unresponsive hand.\n\n“How do you do, Lord Cantlemere? It is chilly for the time of year,\r\nbut rather warm indoors. May I take your overcoat?”\n\n“No, I thank you; I will not take it off.”\n\nHolmes laid his hand insistently upon the sleeve.\n\n“Pray allow me! My friend Dr.\xa0Watson would assure you\r\nthat these changes of temperature are most insidious.”\n\nHis Lordship shook himself free with some impatience.\n\n“I am quite comfortable, sir. I have no need to stay. I have simply\r\nlooked in to know how your self-appointed task was progressing.”\n\n“It is difficult\ufeff—very difficult.”\n\n“I feared that you would find it so.”\n\nThere was a distinct sneer in the old courtier’s words and\r\nmanner.\n\n“Every man finds his limitations, Mr.\xa0Holmes, but at\r\nleast it cures us of the weakness of self-satisfaction.”\n\n“Yes, sir, I have been much perplexed.”\n\n“No doubt.”\n\n“Especially upon one point. Possibly you could help me upon it?”\n\n“You apply for my advice rather late in the day. I thought that you\r\nhad your own all-sufficient methods. Still, I am ready to help you.”\n\n“You see, Lord Cantlemere, we can no doubt frame a case against the\r\nactual thieves.”\n\n“When you have caught them.”\n\n“Exactly. But the question is\ufeff—how shall we proceed against the\r\nreceiver?”\n\n“Is this not rather premature?”\n\n“It is as well to have our plans ready. Now, what would you regard as\r\nfinal evidence against the receiver?”\n\n“The actual possession of the stone.”\n\n“You would arrest him upon that?”\n\n“Most undoubtedly.”\n\nHolmes seldom laughed, but he got as near it as his old friend Watson\r\ncould remember.\n\n“In that case, my dear sir, I shall be under the painful necessity of\r\nadvising your arrest.”\n\nLord Cantlemere was very angry. Some of the ancient fires flickered\r\nup into his sallow cheeks.\n\n“You take a great liberty, Mr.\xa0Holmes. In fifty years of\r\nofficial life I cannot recall such a case. I am a busy man, sir engaged\r\nupon important affairs, and I have no time or taste for foolish jokes. I\r\nmay tell you frankly, sir, that I have never been a believer in your\r\npowers, and that I have always been of the opinion that the matter was\r\nfar safer in the hands of the regular police force. Your conduct\r\nconfirms all my conclusions. I have the honour, sir, to wish you good\r\nevening.”\n\nHolmes had swiftly changed his position and was between the peer and\r\nthe door.\n\n“One moment, sir,” said he. “To actually go off with the Mazarin\r\nstone would be a more serious offence than to be found in temporary\r\npossession of it.”\n\n“Sir, this is intolerable! Let me pass.”\n\n“Put your hand in the right-hand pocket of your overcoat.”\n\n“What do you mean, sir?”\n\n“Come\ufeff—come, do what I ask.”\n\nAn instant later the amazed peer was standing, blinking and\r\nstammering, with the great yellow stone on his shaking palm.\n\n“What! What! How is this, Mr.\xa0Holmes?”\n\n“Too bad, Lord Cantlemere, too bad!” cried Holmes. “My old friend\r\nhere will tell you that I have an impish habit of practical joking. Also\r\nthat I can never resist a dramatic situation. I took the liberty\ufeff—the\r\nvery great liberty, I admit\ufeff—of putting the stone into your pocket at the\r\nbeginning of our interview.”\n\nThe old peer stared from the stone to the smiling face before\r\nhim.\n\n“Sir, I am bewildered. But\ufeff—yes\ufeff—it is indeed the Mazarin stone. We are\r\ngreatly your debtors, Mr.\xa0Holmes. Your sense of humour may,\r\nas you admit, be somewhat perverted, and its exhibition remarkably\r\nuntimely, but at least I withdraw any reflection I have made upon your\r\namazing professional powers. But how\ufeff—”\n\n“The case is but half finished; the details can wait. No doubt, Lord\r\nCantlemere, your pleasure in telling of this successful result in the\r\nexalted circle to which you return will be some small atonement for my\r\npractical joke. Billy, you will show his Lordship out, and tell\r\nMrs.\xa0Hudson that I should be glad if she would send up\r\ndinner for two as soon as possible.”\n\nThe Adventure of the Three Gables\n\nI don’t think that any of my adventures with\r\nMr.\xa0Sherlock Holmes opened quite so abruptly, or so\r\ndramatically, as that which I associate with The Three Gables. I had not\r\nseen Holmes for some days and had no idea of the new channel into which\r\nhis activities had been directed. He was in a chatty mood that morning,\r\nhowever, and had just settled me into the well-worn low armchair on one\r\nside of the fire, while he had curled down with his pipe in his mouth\r\nupon the opposite chair, when our visitor arrived. If I had said that a\r\nmad bull had arrived it would give a clearer impression of what\r\noccurred.\n\nThe door had flown open and a huge negro had burst into the room. He\r\nwould have been a comic figure if he had not been terrific, for he was\r\ndressed in a very loud gray check suit with a flowing salmon-coloured\r\ntie. His broad face and flattened nose were thrust forward, as his\r\nsullen dark eyes, with a smouldering gleam of malice in them, turned\r\nfrom one of us to the other.\n\n“Which of you gen’l’men is Masser Holmes?” he asked.\n\nHolmes raised his pipe with a languid smile.\n\n“Oh! it’s you, is it?” said our visitor, coming with an unpleasant,\r\nstealthy step round the angle of the table. “See here, Masser Holmes,\r\nyou keep your hands out of other folks’ business. Leave folks to manage\r\ntheir own affairs. Got that, Masser Holmes?”\n\n“Keep on talking,” said Holmes. “It’s fine.”\n\n“Oh! it’s fine, is it?” growled the savage. “It won’t be so damn fine\r\nif I have to trim you up a bit. I’ve handled your kind before now, and\r\nthey didn’t look fine when I was through with them. Look at that, Masser\r\nHolmes!”\n\nHe swung a huge knotted lump of a fist under my friend’s nose. Holmes\r\nexamined it closely with an air of great interest.\n\n“Were you born so?” he asked. “Or did it come by degrees?”\n\nIt may have been the icy coolness of my friend, or it may have been\r\nthe slight clatter which I made as I picked up the poker. In any case,\r\nour visitor’s manner became less flamboyant.\n\n“Well, I’ve given you fair warnin’,” said he. “I’ve a friend that’s\r\ninterested out Harrow way\ufeff—you know what I’m meaning\ufeff—and he don’t intend\r\nto have no buttin’ in by you. Got that? You ain’t the law, and I ain’t\r\nthe law either, and if you come in I’ll be on hand also. Don’t you\r\nforget it.”\n\n“I’ve wanted to meet you for some time,” said Holmes. “I won’t ask\r\nyou to sit down, for I don’t like the smell of you, but aren’t you Steve\r\nDixie, the bruiser?”\n\n“That’s my name, Masser Holmes, and you’ll get put through it for\r\nsure if you give me any lip.”\n\n“It is certainly the last thing you need,” said Holmes, staring at\r\nour visitor’s hideous mouth. “But it was the killing of young Perkins\r\noutside the Holborn\ufeff—Bar What! you’re not going?”\n\nThe negro had sprung back, and his face was leaden. “I won’t listen\r\nto no such talk,” said he. “What have I to do with this ’ere Perkins,\r\nMasser Holmes? I was trainin’ at the Bull Ring in Birmingham when this\r\nboy done gone get into trouble.”\n\n“Yes, you’ll tell the magistrate about it, Steve,” said Holmes. “I’ve\r\nbeen watching you and Barney Stockdale\ufeff—”\n\n“So help me the Lord! Masser Holmes\ufeff—”\n\n“That’s enough. Get out of it. I’ll pick you up when I want you.”\n\n“Good-mornin’, Masser Holmes. I hope there ain’t no hard feelin’s\r\nabout this ’ere visit?”\n\n“There will be unless you tell me who sent you.”\n\n“Why, there ain’t no secret about that, Masser Holmes. It was that\r\nsame gen’l’man that you have just done gone mention.”\n\n“And who set him on to it?”\n\n“S’elp me. I don’t know, Masser Holmes. He just say, ‘Steve, you go\r\nsee Mr.\xa0Holmes, and tell him his life ain’t safe if he go\r\ndown Harrow way.’ That’s the whole truth.” Without waiting for any\r\nfurther questioning, our visitor bolted out of the room almost as\r\nprecipitately as he had entered. Holmes knocked out the ashes of his\r\npipe with a quiet chuckle.\n\n“I am glad you were not forced to break his woolly head, Watson. I\r\nobserved your manoeuvres with the poker. But he is really rather a\r\nharmless fellow, a great muscular, foolish, blustering baby, and easily\r\ncowed, as you have seen. He is one of the Spencer John gang and has\r\ntaken part in some dirty work of late which I may clear up when I have\r\ntime. His immediate principal, Barney, is a more astute person. They\r\nspecialize in assaults, intimidation, and the like. What I want to know\r\nis, who is at the back of them on this particular occasion?”\n\n“But why do they want to intimidate you?”\n\n“It is this Harrow Weald case. It decides me to look into the matter,\r\nfor if it is worth anyone’s while to take so much trouble, there must be\r\nsomething in it.”\n\n“But what is it?”\n\n“I was going to tell you when we had this comic interlude. Here is\r\nMrs.\xa0Maberley’s note. If you care to come with me we will\r\nwire her and go out at once.”\n\nDear Mr.\xa0Sherlock Holmes [I read]:\n\nI have had a succession of strange incidents occur to me in\r\nconnection with this house, and I should much value your advice. You\r\nwould find me at home any time tomorrow. The house is within a short\r\nwalk of the Weald Station. I believe that my late husband, Mortimer\r\nMaberley, was one of your early clients.\n\nYours faithfully,\n\nMary Maberley\n\nThe address was “The Three Gables, Harrow Weald.”\n\n“So that’s that!” said Holmes. “And now, if you can spare the time,\r\nWatson, we will get upon our way.”\n\nA short railway journey, and a shorter drive, brought us to the\r\nhouse, a brick and timber villa, standing in its own acre of undeveloped\r\ngrassland. Three small projections above the upper windows made a feeble\r\nattempt to justify its name. Behind was a grove of melancholy,\r\nhalf-grown pines, and the whole aspect of the place was poor and\r\ndepressing. None the less, we found the house to be well furnished, and\r\nthe lady who received us was a most engaging elderly person, who bore\r\nevery mark of refinement and culture.\n\n“I remember your husband well, madam,” said Holmes, “though it is\r\nsome years since he used my services in some trifling matter.”\n\n“Probably you would be more familiar with the name of my son\r\nDouglas.”\n\nHolmes looked at her with great interest.\n\n“Dear me! Are you the mother of Douglas Maberley? I knew him\r\nslightly. But of course all London knew him. What a magnificent creature\r\nhe was! Where is he now?”\n\n“Dead, Mr.\xa0Holmes, dead! He was attaché at Rome, and he\r\ndied there of pneumonia last month.”\n\n“I am sorry. One could not connect death with such a man. I have\r\nnever known anyone so vitally alive. He lived intensely\ufeff—every fibre of\r\nhim!”\n\n“Too intensely, Mr.\xa0Holmes. That was the ruin of him.\r\nYou remember him as he was\ufeff—debonair and splendid. You did not see the\r\nmoody, morose, brooding creature into which he developed. His heart was\r\nbroken. In a single month I seemed to see my gallant boy turn into a\r\nworn-out cynical man.”\n\n“A love affair\ufeff—a woman?”\n\n“Or a fiend. Well, it was not to talk of my poor lad that I asked you\r\nto come, Mr.\xa0Holmes.”\n\n“Dr.\xa0Watson and I are at your service.”\n\n“There have been some very strange happenings. I have been in this\r\nhouse more than a year now, and as I wished to lead a retired life I\r\nhave seen little of my neighbours. Three days ago I had a call from a\r\nman who said that he was a house agent. He said that this house would\r\nexactly suit a client of his, and that if I would part with it money\r\nwould be no object. It seemed to me very strange as there are several\r\nempty houses on the market which appear to be equally eligible, but\r\nnaturally I was interested in what he said. I therefore named a price\r\nwhich was five hundred pounds more than I gave. He at once closed with\r\nthe offer, but added that his client desired to buy the furniture as\r\nwell and would I put a price upon it. Some of this furniture is from my\r\nold home, and it is, as you see, very good, so that I named a good round\r\nsum. To this also he at once agreed. I had always wanted to travel, and\r\nthe bargain was so good a one that it really seemed that I should be my\r\nown mistress for the rest of my life.\n\n“Yesterday the man arrived with the agreement all drawn out. Luckily\r\nI showed it to Mr.\xa0Sutro, my lawyer, who lives in Harrow.\r\nHe said to me, ‘This is a very strange document. Are you aware that if\r\nyou sign it you could not legally take anything out of the\r\nhouse\ufeff—not even your own private possessions?’ When the man came again in\r\nthe evening I pointed this out, and I said that I meant only to sell the\r\nfurniture.\n\n“\u200a‘No, no, everything,’ said he.\n\n“\u200a‘But my clothes? My jewels?’\n\n“\u200a‘Well, well, some concession might be made for your personal\r\neffects. But nothing shall go out of the house unchecked. My client is a\r\nvery liberal man, but he has his fads and his own way of doing things.\r\nIt is everything or nothing with him.’\n\n“\u200a‘Then it must be nothing,’ said I. And there the matter was left,\r\nbut the whole thing seemed to me to be so unusual that I thought\ufeff—”\n\nHere we had a very extraordinary interruption.\n\nHolmes raised his hand for silence. Then he strode across the room,\r\nflung open the door, and dragged in a great gaunt woman whom he had\r\nseized by the shoulder. She entered with ungainly struggle like some\r\nhuge awkward chicken, torn, squawking, out of its coop.\n\n“Leave me alone! What are you a-doin’ of?” she screeched.\n\n“Why, Susan, what is this?”\n\n“Well, ma’am, I was comin’ in to ask if the visitors was stayin’ for\r\nlunch when this man jumped out at me.”\n\n“I have been listening to her for the last five minutes, but did not\r\nwish to interrupt your most interesting narrative. Just a little wheezy,\r\nSusan, are you not? You breathe too heavily for that kind of work.”\n\nSusan turned a sulky but amazed face upon her captor. “Who be you,\r\nanyhow, and what right have you a-pullin’ me about like this?”\n\n“It was merely that I wished to ask a question in your presence. Did\r\nyou, Mrs.\xa0Maberley, mention to anyone that you were going\r\nto write to me and consult me?”\n\n“No, Mr.\xa0Holmes, I did not.”\n\n“Who posted your letter?”\n\n“Susan did.”\n\n“Exactly. Now, Susan, to whom was it that you wrote or sent a message\r\nto say that your mistress was asking advice from me?”\n\n“It’s a lie. I sent no message.”\n\n“Now, Susan, wheezy people may not live long, you know. It’s a wicked\r\nthing to tell fibs. Whom did you tell?”\n\n“Susan!” cried her mistress, “I believe you are a bad, treacherous\r\nwoman. I remember now that I saw you speaking to someone over the\r\nhedge.”\n\n“That was my own business,” said the woman sullenly.\n\n“Suppose I tell you that it was Barney Stockdale to whom you spoke?”\r\nsaid Holmes.\n\n“Well, if you know, what do you want to ask for?”\n\n“I was not sure, but I know now. Well now, Susan, it will be worth\r\nten pounds to you if you will tell me who is at the back of Barney.”\n\n“Someone that could lay down a thousand pounds for every ten you have\r\nin the world.”\n\n“So, a rich man? No; you smiled\ufeff—a rich woman. Now we have got so far,\r\nyou may as well give the name and earn the tenner.”\n\n“I’ll see you in hell first.”\n\n“Oh, Susan! Language!”\n\n“I am clearing out of here. I’ve had enough of you all. I’ll send for\r\nmy box tomorrow.” She flounced for the door.\n\n“Goodbye, Susan. Paregoric is the stuff.\ufeff\u200a\ufeff… Now,” he continued,\r\nturning suddenly from lively to severe when the door had closed behind\r\nthe flushed and angry woman, “this gang means business. Look how close\r\nthey play the game. Your letter to me had the 10\xa0p.m.\r\npostmark. And yet Susan passes the word to Barney. Barney has time to go\r\nto his employer and get instructions; he or she\ufeff—I incline to the latter\r\nfrom Susan’s grin when she thought I had blundered\ufeff—forms a plan. Black\r\nSteve is called in, and I am warned off by eleven o’clock next morning.\r\nThat’s quick work, you know.”\n\n“But what do they want?”\n\n“Yes, that’s the question. Who had the house before you?”\n\n“A retired sea captain called Ferguson.”\n\n“Anything remarkable about him?”\n\n“Not that ever I heard of.”\n\n“I was wondering whether he could have buried something. Of course,\r\nwhen people bury treasure nowadays they do it in the Post-Office bank.\r\nBut there are always some lunatics about. It would be a dull world\r\nwithout them. At first I thought of some buried valuable. But why, in\r\nthat case, should they want your furniture? You don’t happen to have a\r\nRaphael or a first folio Shakespeare without knowing it?”\n\n“No, I don’t think I have anything rarer than a Crown Derby\r\ntea-set.”\n\n“That would hardly justify all this mystery. Besides, why should they\r\nnot openly state what they want? If they covet your tea-set, they can\r\nsurely offer a price for it without buying you out, lock, stock, and\r\nbarrel. No, as I read it, there is something which you do not know that\r\nyou have, and which you would not give up if you did know.”\n\n“That is how I read it,” said I.\n\n“Dr.\xa0Watson agrees, so that settles it.”\n\n“Well, Mr.\xa0Holmes, what can it be?”\n\n“Let us see whether by this purely mental analysis we can get it to a\r\nfiner point. You have been in this house a year.”\n\n“Nearly two.”\n\n“All the better. During this long period no one wants anything from\r\nyou. Now suddenly within three or four days you have urgent demands.\r\nWhat would you gather from that?”\n\n“It can only mean,” said I, “that the object, whatever it may be, has\r\nonly just come into the house.”\n\n“Settled once again,” said Holmes. “Now, Mrs.\xa0Maberley\r\nhas any object just arrived?”\n\n“No, I have bought nothing new this year.”\n\n“Indeed! That is very remarkable. Well, I think we had best let\r\nmatters develop a little further until we have clearer data. Is that\r\nlawyer of yours a capable man?”\n\n“Mr.\xa0Sutro is most capable.”\n\n“Have you another maid, or was the fair Susan, who has just banged\r\nyour front door alone?”\n\n“I have a young girl.”\n\n“Try and get Sutro to spend a night or two in the house. You might\r\npossibly want protection.”\n\n“Against whom?”\n\n“Who knows? The matter is certainly obscure. If I can’t find what\r\nthey are after, I must approach the matter from the other end and try to\r\nget at the principal. Did this house-agent man give any address?”\n\n“Simply his card and occupation. Haines-Johnson, Auctioneer and\r\nValuer.”\n\n“I don’t think we shall find him in the directory. Honest business\r\nmen don’t conceal their place of business. Well, you will let me know\r\nany fresh development. I have taken up your case, and you may rely upon\r\nit that I shall see it through.”\n\nAs we passed through the hall Holmes’s eyes, which missed nothing,\r\nlighted upon several trunks and cases which were piled in a corner. The\r\nlabels shone out upon them.\n\n“\u200a‘Milano.’ ‘Lucerne.’ These are from Italy.”\n\n“They are poor Douglas’s things.”\n\n“You have not unpacked them? How long have you had them?”\n\n“They arrived last week.”\n\n“But you said\ufeff—why, surely this might be the missing link. How do we\r\nknow that there is not something of value there?”\n\n“There could not possibly be, Mr.\xa0Holmes. Poor Douglas\r\nhad only his pay and a small annuity. What could he have of value?”\n\nHolmes was lost in thought.\n\n“Delay no longer, Mrs.\xa0Maberley,” he said at last. “Have\r\nthese things taken upstairs to your bedroom. Examine them as soon as\r\npossible and see what they cohtain. I will come tomorrow and hear your\r\nreport.”\n\nIt was quite evident that The Three Gables was under very close\r\nsurveillance, for as we came round the high hedge at the end of the lane\r\nthere was the negro prizefighter standing in the shadow. We came on him\r\nquite suddenly, and a grim and menacing figure he looked in that lonely\r\nplace. Holmes clapped his hand to his pocket.\n\n“Lookin’ for your gun, Masser Holmes?”\n\n“No, for my scent-bottle, Steve.”\n\n“You are funny, Masser Holmes, ain’t you?”\n\n“It won’t be funny for you, Steve, if I get after you. I gave you\r\nfair warning this morning.”\n\n“Well, Masser Holmes, I done gone think over what you said, and I\r\ndon’t want no more talk about that affair of Masser Perkins. S’pose I\r\ncan help you, Masser Holmes, I will.”\n\n“Well, then, tell me who is behind you on this job.”\n\n“So help me the Lord! Masser Holmes, I told you the truth before. I\r\ndon’t know. My boss Barney gives me orders and that’s all.”\n\n“Well, just bear in mind, Steve, that the lady in that house, and\r\neverything under that roof, is under my protection. Don’t forget\r\nit.”\n\n“All right, Masser Holmes. I’ll remember.”\n\n“I’ve got him thoroughly frightened for his own skin, Watson,” Holmes\r\nremarked as we walked on. “I think he would double-cross his employer if\r\nhe knew who he was. It was lucky I had some knowledge of the Spencer\r\nJohn crowd, and that Steve was one of them. Now, Watson, this is a case\r\nfor Langdale Pike, and I am going to see him now. When I get back I may\r\nbe clearer in the matter.”\n\nI saw no more of Holmes during the day, but I could well imagine how\r\nhe spent it, for Langdale Pike was his human book of reference upon all\r\nmatters of social scandal. This strange, languid creature spent his\r\nwaking hours in the bow window of a St.\xa0James’s Street club\r\nand was the receiving-station as well as the transmitter for all the\r\ngossip of the metropolis. He made, it was said, a four-figure income by\r\nthe paragraphs which he contributed every week to the garbage papers\r\nwhich cater to an inquisitive public. If ever, far down in the turbid\r\ndepths of London life, there was some strange swirl or eddy, it was\r\nmarked with automatic exactness by this human dial upon the surface.\r\nHolmes discreetly helped Langdale to knowledge, and on occasion was\r\nhelped in turn.\n\nWhen I met my friend in his room early next morning, I was conscious\r\nfrom his bearing that all was well, but none the less a most unpleasant\r\nsurprise was awaiting us. It took the shape of the following\r\ntelegram:\n\nPlease come out at once. Client’s house burgled in the night. Police\r\nin possession.\n\nSutro.\n\nHolmes whistled. “The drama has come to a crisis, and quicker than I\r\nhad expected. There is a great driving-power at the back of this\r\nbusiness, Watson, which does not surprise me after what I have heard.\r\nThis Sutro, of course, is her lawyer. I made a mistake, I fear, in not\r\nasking you to spend the night on guard. This fellow has clearly proved a\r\nbroken reed. Well, there is nothing for it but another journey to Harrow\r\nWeald.”\n\nWe found The Three Gables a very different establishment to the\r\norderly household of the previous day. A small group of idlers had\r\nassembled at the garden gate, while a couple of constables were\r\nexamining the windows and the geranium beds. Within we met a gray old\r\ngentleman, who introduced himself as the lawyer together with a\r\nbustling, rubicund inspector, who greeted Hoimes as an old friend.\n\n“Well, Mr.\xa0Holmes, no chance for you in this case, I’m\r\nafraid. Just a common, ordinary burglary, and well within the capacity\r\nof the poor old police. No experts need apply.”\n\n“I am sure the case is in very good hands,” said Holmes. “Merely a\r\ncommon burglary, you say?”\n\n“Quite so. We know pretty well who the men are and where to find\r\nthem. It is that gang of Barney Stockdale, with the big nigger in\r\nit\ufeff—they’ve been seen about here.”\n\n“Excellent! What did they get?”\n\n“Well, they don’t seem to have got much. Mrs.\xa0Maberley\r\nwas chloroformed and the house was\ufeff—Ah! here is the lady herself.”\n\nOur friend of yesterday, looking very pale and ill, had entered the\r\nroom, leaning upon a little maidservant.\n\n“You gave me good advice, Mr.\xa0Holmes,” said she, smiling\r\nruefully. “Alas, I did not take it! I did not wish to trouble\r\nMr.\xa0Sutro, and so I was unprotected.”\n\n“I only heard of it this morning,” the lawyer explained.\n\n“Mr.\xa0Holmes advised me to have some friend in the house.\r\nI neglected his advice, and I have paid for it.”\n\n“You look wretchedly ill,” said Holmes. “Perhaps you are hardly equal\r\nto telling me what occurred.”\n\n“It is all here,” said the inspector, tapping a bulky notebook.\n\n“Still, if the lady is not too exhausted\ufeff—”\n\n“There is really so little to tell. I have no doubt that wicked Susan\r\nhad planned an entrance for them. They must have known the house to an\r\ninch. I was conscious for a moment of the chloroform rag which was\r\nthrust over my mouth, but I have no notion how long I may have been\r\nsenseless. When I woke, one man was at the bedside and another was\r\nrising with a bundle in his hand from among my son’s baggage, which was\r\npartially opened and littered over the floor. Before he could get away I\r\nsprang up and seized him.”\n\n“You took a big risk,” said the inspector.\n\n“I clung to him, but he shook me off, and the other may have struck\r\nme, for I can remember no more. Mary the maid heard the noise and began\r\nscreaming out of the window. That brought the police, but the rascals\r\nhad got away.”\n\n“What did they take?”\n\n“Well, I don’t think there is anything of value missing. I am sure\r\nthere was nothing in my son’s trunks.”\n\n“Did the men leave no clue?”\n\n“There was one sheet of paper which I may have torn from the man that\r\nI grasped. It was lying all crumpled on the floor. It is in my son’s\r\nhandwriting.”\n\n“Which means that it is not of much use,” said the inspector. “Now if\r\nit had been in the burglar’s\ufeff—”\n\n“Exactly,” said Holmes. “What rugged common sense! None the less, I\r\nshould be curious to see it.”\n\nThe inspector drew a folded sheet of foolscap from his\r\npocketbook.\n\n“I never pass anything, however trifling,” said he with some\r\npomposity. “That is my advice to you, Mr.\xa0Holmes. In\r\ntwentyfive years’ experience I have learned my lesson. There is always\r\nthe chance of fingermarks or something.”\n\nHolmes inspected the sheet of paper.\n\n“What do you make of it, Inspector?”\n\n“Seems to be the end of some queer novel, so far as I can see.”\n\n“It may certainly prove to be the end of a queer tale,” said Holmes.\r\n“You have noticed the number on the top of the page. It is two hundred\r\nand forty-five. Where are the odd two hundred and forty-four pages?”\n\n“Well, I suppose the burglars got those. Much good may it do\r\nthem!”\n\n“It seems a queer thing to break into a house in order to steal such\r\npapers as that. Does it suggest anything to you, Inspector?”\n\n“Yes, sir, it suggests that in their hurry the rascals just grabbed\r\nat what came first to hand. I wish them joy of what they got.”\n\n“Why should they go to my son’s things?” asked\r\nMrs.\xa0Maberley.\n\n“Well, they found nothing valuable downstairs, so they tried their\r\nluck upstairs. That is how I read it. What do you make of it,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes?”\n\n“I must think it over, Inspector. Come to the window, Watson.” Then,\r\nas we stood together, he read over the fragment of paper. It began in\r\nthe middle of a sentence and ran like this:\n\n“…\xa0face bled considerably from the cuts and blows, but it was nothing\r\nto the bleeding of his heart as he saw that lovely face, the face for\r\nwhich he had been prepared to sacrifice his very life, looking out at\r\nhis agony and humiliation. She smiled\ufeff—yes, by Heaven! she smiled, like\r\nthe heartless fiend she was, as he looked up at her. It was at that\r\nmoment that love died and hate was born. Man must live for something. If\r\nit is not for your embrace, my lady, then it shall surely be for your\r\nundoing and my complete revenge.”\n\n“Queer grammar!” said Holmes with a smile as he handed the paper back\r\nto the inspector. “Did you notice how the ‘he’ suddenly changed to ‘my’?\r\nThe writer was so carried away by his own story that he imagined himself\r\nat the supreme moment to be the hero.”\n\n“It seemed mighty poor stuff,” said the inspector as he replaced it\r\nin his book. “What! are you off, Mr.\xa0Holmes?”\n\n“I don’t think there is anything more for me to do now that the case\r\nis in such capable hands. By the way, Mrs.\xa0Maberley, did\r\nyou say you wished to travel?”\n\n“It has always been my dream, Mr.\xa0Holmes.”\n\n“Where would you like to go\ufeff—Cairo, Madeira, the Riviera?”\n\n“Oh if I had the money I would go round the world.”\n\n“Quite so. Round the world. Well, good morning. I may drop you a line\r\nin the evening.” As we passed the window I caught a glimpse of the\r\ninspector’s smile and shake of the head. “These clever fellows have\r\nalways a touch of madness.” That was what I read in the inspector’s\r\nsmile.\n\n“Now, Watson, we are at the last lap of our little journey,” said\r\nHolmes when we were back in the roar of central London once more. “I\r\nthink we had best clear the matter up at once, and it would be well that\r\nyou should come with me, for it is safer to have a witness when you are\r\ndealing with such a lady as Isadora Klein.”\n\nWe had taken a cab and were speeding to some address in Grosvenor\r\nSquare. Holmes had been sunk in thought, but he roused himself\r\nsuddenly.\n\n“By the way, Watson, I suppose you see it all clearly?”\n\n“No, I can’t say that I do. I only gather that we are going to see\r\nthe lady who is behind all this mischief.”\n\n“Exactly! But does the name Isadora Klein convey nothing to you? She\r\nwas, of course, the celebrated beauty. There was never a woman to touch\r\nher. She is pure Spanish, the real blood of the masterfui Conquistadors,\r\nand her people have been leaders in Pernambuco for generations. She\r\nmarried the aged German sugar king, Klein, and presently found herself\r\nthe richest as well as the most lovely widow upon earth. Then there was\r\nan interval of adventure when she pleased her own tastes. She had\r\nseveral lovers, and Douglas Maberley, one of the most striking men in\r\nLondon, was one of them. It was by all accounts more than an adventure\r\nwith him. He was not a society butterfly but a strong, proud man who\r\ngave and expected all. But she is the belle dame sans merci of\r\nfiction. When her caprice is satisfied the matter is ended, and if the\r\nother party in the matter can’t take her word for it she knows how to\r\nbring it home to him.”\n\n“Then that was his own story\ufeff—”\n\n“Ah! you are piecing it together now. I hear that she is about to\r\nmarry the young Duke of Lomond, who might almost be her son. His Grace’s\r\nma might overlook the age, but a big scandal would be a different\r\nmatter, so it is imperative\ufeff—Ah! here we are.”\n\nIt was one of the finest corner-houses of the West End. A\r\nmachine-like footman took up our cards and returned with word that the\r\nlady was not at home. “Then we shall wait until she is,” said Holmes\r\ncheerfully.\n\nThe machine broke down.\n\n“Not at home means not at home to you,” said the footman.\n\n“Good,” Holmes answered. “That means that we shall not have to wait.\r\nKindly give this note to your mistress.”\n\nHe scribbled three or four words upon a sheet of his notebook, folded\r\nit, and handed it to the man.\n\n“What did you say, Holmes?” I asked.\n\n“I simply wrote: ‘Shall it be the police, then?’ I think that should\r\npass us in.”\n\nIt did\ufeff—with amazing celerity. A minute later we were in an Arabian\r\nNights drawing-room, vast and wonderful, in a half gloom, picked out\r\nwith an occasional pink electric light. The lady had come, I felt, to\r\nthat time of life when even the proudest beauty finds the half light\r\nmore welcome. She rose from a settee as we entered: tall, queenly, a\r\nperfect figure, a lovely mask-like face, with two wonderful Spanish eyes\r\nwhich looked murder at us both.\n\n“What is this intrusion\ufeff—and this insulting message?” she asked,\r\nholding up the slip of paper.\n\n“I need not explain, madame. I have too much respect for your\r\nintelligence to do so\ufeff—though I confess that intelligence has been\r\nsurprisingly at fault of late.”\n\n“How so, sir?”\n\n“By supposing that your hired bullies could frighten me from my work.\r\nSurely no man would take up my profession if it were not that danger\r\nattracts him. It was you, then, who forced me to examine the case of\r\nyoung Maberley.”\n\n“I have no idea what you are talking about. What have I to do with\r\nhired bullies?”\n\nHolmes turned away wearily.\n\n“Yes, I have underrated your intelligence. Well, good afternoon!”\n\n“Stop! Where are you going?”\n\n“To Scotland Yard.”\n\nWe had not got halfway to the door before she had overtaken us and\r\nwas holding his arm. She had turned in a moment from steel to\r\nvelvet.\n\n“Come and sit down, gentlemen. Let us talk this matter over. I feel\r\nthat I may be frank with you, Mr.\xa0Holmes. You have the\r\nfeelings of a gentleman. How quick a woman’s instinct is to find it out.\r\nI will treat you as a friend.”\n\n“I cannot promise to reciprocate, madame. I am not the law, but I\r\nrepresent justice so far as my feeble powers go. I am ready to listen,\r\nand then I will tell you how I will act.”\n\n“No doubt it was foolish of me to threaten a brave man like\r\nyourself.”\n\n“What was really foolish, madame, is that you have placed yourself in\r\nthe power of a band of rascals who may blackmail or give you away.”\n\n“No, no! I am not so simple. Since I have promised to be frank, I may\r\nsay that no one, save Barney Stockdale and Susan, his wife, have the\r\nleast idea who their employer is. As to them, well, it is not the\r\nfirst\ufeff—” She smiled and nodded with a charming coquettish intimacy.\n\n“I see. You’ve tested them before.”\n\n“They are good hounds who run silent.”\n\n“Such hounds have a way sooner or later of biting the hand that feeds\r\nthem. They will be arrested for this burglary. The police are already\r\nafter them.”\n\n“They will take what comes to them. That is what they are paid for. I\r\nshall not appear in the matter.”\n\n“Unless I bring you into it.”\n\n“No, no, you would not. You are a gentleman. It is a woman’s\r\nsecret.”\n\n“In the first place, you must give back this manuscript.”\n\nShe broke into a ripple of laughter and walked to the fireplace.\r\nThere was a calcined mass which she broke up with the poker. “Shall I\r\ngive this back?” she asked. So roguish and exquisite did she look as she\r\nstood before us with a challenging smile that I felt of all Holmes’s\r\ncriminals this was the one whom he would find it hardest to face.\r\nHowever, he was immune from sentiment.\n\n“That seals your fate,” he said coldly. “You are very prompt in your\r\nactions, madame, but you have overdone it on this occasion.”\n\nShe threw the poker down with a clatter.\n\n“How hard you are!” she cried. “May I tell you the whole story?”\n\n“I fancy I could tell it to you.”\n\n“But you must look at it with my eyes, Mr.\xa0Holmes. You\r\nmust realize it from the point of view of a woman who sees all her\r\nlife’s ambition about to be ruined at the last moment. Is such a woman\r\nto be blamed if she protects herself?”\n\n“The original sin was yours.”\n\n“Yes, yes! I admit it. He was a dear boy, Douglas, but it so chanced\r\nthat he could not fit into my plans. He wanted marriage\ufeff—marriage,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes\ufeff—with a penniless commoner. Nothing less would\r\nserve him. Then he became pertinacious. Because I had given he seemed to\r\nthink that I still must give, and to him only. It was intolerable. At\r\nlast I had to make him realize it.”\n\n“By hiring ruffians to beat him under your own window.”\n\n“You do indeed seem to know everything. Well, it is true. Barney and\r\nthe boys drove him away, and were, I admit, a little rough in doing so.\r\nBut what did he do then? Could I have believed that a gentleman would do\r\nsuch an act? He wrote a book in which he described his own story. I, of\r\ncourse, was the wolf; he the lamb. It was all there, under different\r\nnames, of course; but who in all London would have failed to recognize\r\nit? What do you say to that, Mr.\xa0Holmes?”\n\n“Well, he was within his rights.”\n\n“It was as if the air of Italy had got into his blood and brought\r\nwith it the old cruel Italian spirit. He wrote to me and sent me a copy\r\nof his book that I might have the torture of anticipation. There were\r\ntwo copies, he said\ufeff—one for me, one for his publisher.”\n\n“How did you know the publisher’s had not reached him?”\n\n“I knew who his publisher was. It is not his only novel, you know. I\r\nfound out that he had not heard from Italy. Then came Douglas’s sudden\r\ndeath. So long as that other manuscript was in the world there was no\r\nsafety for me. Of course, it must be among his effects, and these would\r\nbe returned to his mother. I set the gang at work. One of them got into\r\nthe house as servant. I wanted to do the thing honestly. I really and\r\ntruly did. I was ready to buy the house and everything in it. I offered\r\nany price she cared to ask. I only tried the other way when everything\r\nelse had failed. Now, Mr.\xa0Holmes, granting that I was too\r\nhard on Douglas\ufeff—and, God knows, I am sorry for it!\ufeff—what else could I do\r\nwith my whole future at stake?”\n\nSherlock Holmes shrugged his shoulders.\n\n“Well, well,” said he, “I suppose I shall have to compound a felony\r\nas usual. How much does it cost to go round the world in first-class\r\nstyle?”\n\nThe lady stared in amazement.\n\n“Could it be done on five thousand pounds?”\n\n“Well, I should think so, indeed!”\n\n“Very good. I think you will sign me a check for that, and I will see\r\nthat it comes to Mrs.\xa0Maberley. You owe her a little change\r\nof air. Meantime, lady”\ufeff—he wagged a cautionary forefinger\ufeff—“have a care!\r\nHave a care! You can’t play with edged tools forever without cutting\r\nthose dainty hands.”\n\nThe Adventure of the Sussex Vampire\n\nHolmes had read carefully a note which the last post had brought him.\r\nThen, with the dry chuckle which was his nearest approach to a laugh, he\r\ntossed it over to me.\n\n“For a mixture of the modern and the medieval, of the practical and\r\nof the wildly fanciful, I think this is surely the limit,” said he.\r\n“What do you make of it, Watson?”\n\nI read as follows:\n\n46, Old Jewry Nov.\r\n19th\n\nRe Vampires\n\nSir:\n\nOur client, Mr.\xa0Robert Ferguson, of Ferguson and\r\nMuirhead, tea brokers, of Mincing Lane, has made some inquiry from us in\r\na communication of even date concerning vampires. As our firm\r\nspecializes entirely upon the assessment of machinery the matter hardly\r\ncomes within our purview, and we have therefore recommended\r\nMr.\xa0Ferguson to call upon you and lay the matter before\r\nyou. We have not forgotten your successful action in the case of Matilda\r\nBriggs.\n\nWe are, sir,\r\nFaithfully yours,\n\nMorrison, Morrison, and Dodd\r\nper E. J. C.\n\n“Matilda Briggs was not the name of a young woman, Watson,” said\r\nHolmes in a reminiscent voice. “It was a ship which is associated with\r\nthe giant rat of Sumatra, a story for which the world is not yet\r\nprepared. But what do we know about vampires? Does it come within our\r\npurview either? Anything is better than stagnation, but really we seem\r\nto have been switched on to a Grimms’ fairy tale. Make a long arm,\r\nWatson, and see what V has to say.”\n\nI leaned back and took down the great index volume to which he\r\nreferred. Holmes balanced it on his knee, and his eyes moved slowly and\r\nlovingly over the record of old cases, mixed with the accumulated\r\ninformation of a lifetime.\n\n“Voyage of the Gloria Scott,” he read. “That was a bad\r\nbusiness. I have some recollection that you made a record of it, Watson,\r\nthough I was unable to congratulate you upon the result. Victor Lynch,\r\nthe forger. Venomous lizard or gila. Remarkable case, that! Vittoria,\r\nthe circus belle. Vanderbilt and the Yeggman. Vipers. Vigor, the\r\nHammersmith wonder. Hullo! Hullo! Good old index. You can’t beat it.\r\nListen to this, Watson. Vampirism in Hungary. And again, Vampires in\r\nTransylvania.” He turned over the pages with eagerness, but after a\r\nshort intent perusal he threw down the great book with a snarl of\r\ndisappointment.\n\n“Rubbish, Watson, rubbish! What have we to do with walking corpses\r\nwho can only be held in their grave by stakes driven through their\r\nhearts? It’s pure lunacy.”\n\n“But surely,” said I, “the vampire was not necessarily a dead man? A\r\nliving person might have the habit. I have read, for example, of the old\r\nsucking the blood of the young in order to retain their youth.”\n\n“You are right, Watson. It mentions the legend in one of these\r\nreferences. But are we to give serious attention to such things? This\r\nagency stands flat-footed upon the ground, and there it must remain. The\r\nworld is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply. I fear that we cannot\r\ntake Mr.\xa0Robert Ferguson very seriously. Possibly this note\r\nmay be from him and may throw some light upon what is worrying him.”\n\nHe took up a second letter which had lain unnoticed upon the table\r\nwhile he had been absorbed with the first. This he began to read with a\r\nsmile of amusement upon his face which gradually faded away into an\r\nexpression of intense interest and concentration. When he had finished\r\nhe sat for some little time lost in thought with the letter dangling\r\nfrom his fingers. Finally, with a start, he aroused himself from his\r\nreverie.\n\n“Cheeseman’s, Lamberley. Where is Lamberley, Watson?”\n\n“It is in Sussex, South of Horsham.”\n\n“Not very far, eh? And Cheeseman’s?”\n\n“I know that country, Holmes. It is full of old houses which are\r\nnamed after the men who built them centuries ago. You get Odley’s and\r\nHarvey’s and Carriton’s\ufeff—the folk are forgotten but their names live in\r\ntheir houses.”\n\n“Precisely,” said Holmes coldly. It was one of the peculiarities of\r\nhis proud, self-contained nature that though he docketed any fresh\r\ninformation very quietly and accurately in his brain, he seldom made any\r\nacknowledgment to the giver. “I rather fancy we shall know a good deal\r\nmore about Cheeseman’s, Lamberley, before we are through. The letter is,\r\nas I had hoped, from Robert Ferguson. By the way, he claims acquaintance\r\nwith you.”\n\n“With me!”\n\n“You had better read it.”\n\nHe handed the letter across. It was headed with the address\r\nquoted.\n\nDear\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes [it said]:\n\nI have been recommended to you by my lawyers, but indeed the matter\r\nis so extraordinarily delicate that it is most difficult to discuss. It\r\nconcerns a friend for whom I am acting. This gentleman married some five\r\nyears ago a Peruvian lady, the daughter of a Peruvian merchant, whom he\r\nhad met in connection with the importation of nitrates. The lady was\r\nvery beautiful, but the fact of her foreign birth and of her alien\r\nreligion always caused a separation of interests and of feelings between\r\nhusband and wife, so that after a time his love may have cooled towards\r\nher and he may have come to regard their union as a mistake. He felt\r\nthere were sides of her character which he could never explore or\r\nunderstand. This was the more painful as she was as loving a wife as a\r\nman could have\ufeff—to all appearance absolutely devoted.\n\nNow for the point which I will make more plain when we meet. Indeed,\r\nthis note is merely to give you a general idea of the situation and to\r\nascertain whether you would care to interest yourself in the matter. The\r\nlady began to show some curious traits quite alien to her ordinarily\r\nsweet and gentle disposition. The gentleman had been married twice and\r\nhe had one son by the first wife. This boy was now fifteen, a very\r\ncharming and affectionate youth, though unhappily injured through an\r\naccident in childhood. Twice the wife was caught in the act of\r\nassaulting this poor lad in the most unprovoked way. Once she struck him\r\nwith a stick and left a great weal on his arm. This was a small matter,\r\nhowever, compared with her conduct to her own child, a dear boy just\r\nunder one year of age. On one occasion about a month ago this child had\r\nbeen left by its nurse for a few minutes. A loud cry from the baby, as\r\nof pain, called the nurse back. As she ran into the room she saw her\r\nemployer, the lady, leaning over the baby and apparently biting his\r\nneck. There was a small wound in the neck from which a stream of blood\r\nhad escaped. The nurse was so horrified that she wished to call the\r\nhusband, but the lady implored her not to do so and actually gave her\r\nfive pounds as a price for her silence. No explanation was ever given,\r\nand for the moment the matter was passed over. It left, however, a\r\nterrible impression upon the nurse’s mind, and from that time she began\r\nto watch her mistress closely and to keep a closer guard upon the baby,\r\nwhom she tenderly loved. It seemed to her that even as she watched the\r\nmother, so the mother watched her, and that every time she was compelled\r\nto leave the baby alone the mother was waiting to get at it. Day and\r\nnight the nurse covered the child, and day and night the silent,\r\nwatchful mother seemed to be lying in wait as a wolf waits for a lamb.\r\nIt must read most incredible to you, and yet I beg you to take it\r\nseriously, for a child’s life and a man’s sanity may depend upon it.\n\nAt last there came one dreadful day when the facts could no longer be\r\nconcealed from the husband. The nurse’s nerve had given way; she could\r\nstand the strain no longer, and she made a clean breast of it all to the\r\nman. To him it seemed as wild a tale as it may now seem to you. He knew\r\nhis wife to be a loving wife, and, save for the assaults upon her\r\nstepson, a loving mother. Why, then, should she wound her own dear\r\nlittle baby? He told the nurse that she was dreaming, that her\r\nsuspicions were those of a lunatic, and that such libels upon her\r\nmistress were not to be tolerated. While they were talking a sudden cry\r\nof pain was heard. Nurse and master rushed together to the nursery.\r\nImagine his feelings, Mr.\xa0Holmes, as he saw his wife rise\r\nfrom a kneeling position beside the cot and saw blood upon the child’s\r\nexposed neck and upon the sheet. With a cry of horror, he turned his\r\nwife’s face to the light and saw blood all round her lips. It was\r\nshe\ufeff—she beyond all question\ufeff—who had drunk the poor baby’s blood. So the\r\nmatter stands. She is now confined to her room. There has been no\r\nexplanation. The husband is half demented. He knows, and I know, little\r\nof vampirism beyond the name. We had thought it was some wild tale of\r\nforeign parts. And yet here in the very heart of the English\r\nSussex\ufeff—well, all this can be discussed with you in the morning. Will you\r\nsee me? Will you use your great powers in aiding a distracted man? If\r\nso, kindly wire to Ferguson, Cheeseman’s, Lamberley, and I will be at\r\nyour rooms by ten o’clock.\n\nYours faithfully,\n\nRobert Ferguson\n\nP.S. I believe your friend\r\nWatson played Rugby for Blackheath when I was three-quarter for\r\nRichmond. It is the only personal introduction which I can give.\n\n“Of course I remembered him,” said I as I laid down the letter. “Big\r\nBob Ferguson, the finest three-quarter Richmond ever had. He was always\r\na good-natured chap. It’s like him to be so concerned over a friend’s\r\ncase.”\n\nHolmes looked at me thoughtfully and shook his head.\n\n“I never get your limits, Watson,” said he. “There are unexplored\r\npossibilities about you. Take a wire down, like a good fellow. ‘Will\r\nexamine your case with pleasure.’\u200a”\n\n“Your case!”\n\n“We must not let him think that this agency is a home for the\r\nweak-minded. Of course it is his case. Send him that wire and let the\r\nmatter rest till morning.”\n\nPromptly at ten o’clock next morning Ferguson strode into our room. I\r\nhad remembered him as a long, slab-sided man with loose limbs and a fine\r\nturn of speed which had carried him round many an opposing back. There\r\nis surely nothing in life more painful than to meet the wreck of a fine\r\nathlete whom one has known in his prime. His great frame had fallen in,\r\nhis flaxen hair was scanty, and his shoulders were bowed. I fear that I\r\nroused corresponding emotions in him.\n\n“Hullo, Watson,” said he, and his voice was still deep and hearty.\r\n“You don’t look quite the man you did when I threw you over the ropes\r\ninto the crowd at the Old Deer Park. I expect I have changed a bit also.\r\nBut it’s this last day or two that has aged me. I see by your telegram,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes, that it is no use my pretending to be anyone’s\r\ndeputy.”.\n\n“It is simpler to deal direct,” said Holmes.\n\n“Of course it is. But you can imagine how difficult it is when you\r\nare speaking of the one woman whom you are bound to protect and help.\r\nWhat can I do? How am I to go to the police with such a story? And yet\r\nthe kiddies have got to be protected. Is it madness,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes? Is it something in the blood? Have you any\r\nsimilar case in your experience? For God’s sake, give me some advice,\r\nfor I am at my wit’s end.”\n\n“Very naturally, Mr.\xa0Ferguson. Now sit here and pull\r\nyourself together and give me a few clear answers. I can assure you that\r\nI am very far from being at my wit’s end, and that I am confident we\r\nshall find some solution. First of all, tell me what steps you have\r\ntaken. Is your wife still near the children?”\n\n“We had a dreadful scene. She is a most loving woman,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes. If ever a woman loved a man with all her heart\r\nand soul, she loves me. She was cut to the heart that I should have\r\ndiscovered this horrible, this incredible, secret. She would not even\r\nspeak. She gave no answer to my reproaches, save to gaze at me with a\r\nsort of wild, despairing look in her eyes. Then she rushed to her room\r\nand locked herself in. Since then she has refused to see me. She has a\r\nmaid who was with her before her marriage, Dolores by name\ufeff—a friend\r\nrather than a servant. She takes her food to her.”\n\n“Then the child is in no immediate danger?”\n\n“Mrs.\xa0Mason, the nurse, has sworn that she will not\r\nleave it night or day. I can absolutely trust her. I am more uneasy\r\nabout poor little Jack, for, as I told you in my note, he has twice been\r\nassaulted by her.”\n\n“But never wounded?”\n\n“No, she struck him savagely. It is the more terrible as he is a poor\r\nlittle inoffensive cripple.” Ferguson’s gaunt features softened as he\r\nspoke of his boy. “You would think that the dear lad’s condition would\r\nsoften anyone’s heart. A fall in childhood and a twisted spine,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes. But the dearest, most loving heart within.”\n\nHolmes had picked up the letter of yesterday and was reading it over.\r\n“What other inmates are there in your house,\r\nMr.\xa0Ferguson?”\n\n“Two servants who have not been long with us. One stablehand,\r\nMichael, who sleeps in the house. My wife, myself, my boy Jack, baby,\r\nDolores, and Mrs.\xa0Mason. That is all.”\n\n“I gather that you did not know your wife well at the time of your\r\nmarriage?”\n\n“I had only known her a few weeks.”\n\n“How long had this maid Dolores been with her?”\n\n“Some years.”\n\n“Then your wife’s character would really be better known by Dolores\r\nthan by you?”\n\n“Yes, you may say so.”\n\nHolmes made a note.\n\n“I fancy,” said he, “that I may be of more use at Lamberley than\r\nhere. It is eminently a case for personal investigation. If the lady\r\nremains in her room, our presence could not annoy or inconvenience her.\r\nOf course, we would stay at the inn.”\n\nFerguson gave a gesture of relief.\n\n“It is what I hoped, Mr.\xa0Holmes. There is an excellent\r\ntrain at two from Victoria if you could come.”\n\n“Of course we could come. There is a lull at present. I can give you\r\nmy undivided energies. Watson, of course, comes with us. But there are\r\none or two points upon which I wish to be very sure before I start. This\r\nunhappy lady, as I understand it, has appeared to assault both the\r\nchildren, her own baby and your little son?”\n\n“That is so.”\n\n“But the assaults take different forms, do they not? She has beaten\r\nyour son.”\n\n“Once with a stick and once very savagely with her hands.”\n\n“Did she give no explanation why she struck him?”\n\n“None save that she hated him. Again and again she said so.”\n\n“Well, that is not unknown among stepmothers. A posthumous jealousy,\r\nwe will say. Is the lady jealous by nature?”\n\n“Yes, she is very jealous\ufeff—jealous with all the strength of her fiery\r\ntropical love.”\n\n“But the boy\ufeff—he is fifteen, I understand, and probably very developed\r\nin mind, since his body has been circumscribed in action. Did he give\r\nyou no explanation of these assaults?”\n\n“No, he declared there was no reason.”\n\n“Were they good friends at other times?”\n\n“No, there was never any love between them.”\n\n“Yet you say he is affectionate?”\n\n“Never in the world could there be so devoted a son. My life is his\r\nlife. He is absorbed in what I say or do.”\n\nOnce again Holmes made a note. For some time he sat lost in\r\nthought.\n\n“No doubt you and the boy were great comrades before this second\r\nmarriage. You were thrown very close together, were you not?”\n\n“Very much so.”\n\n“And the boy, having so affectionate a nature, was devoted, no doubt,\r\nto the memory of his mother?”\n\n“Most devoted.”\n\n“He would certainly seem to be a most interesting lad. There is one\r\nother point about these assaults. Were the strange attacks upon the baby\r\nand the assaults upon yow son at the same period?”\n\n“In the first case it was so. It was as if some frenzy had seized\r\nher, and she had vented her rage upon both. In the second case it was\r\nonly Jack who suffered. Mrs.\xa0Mason had no complaint to make\r\nabout the baby.”\n\n“That certainly complicates matters.”\n\n“I don’t quite follow you, Mr.\xa0Holmes.”\n\n“Possibly not. One forms provisional theories and waits for time or\r\nfuller knowledge to explode them. A bad habit,\r\nMr.\xa0Ferguson, but human nature is weak. I fear that your\r\nold friend here has given an exaggerated view of my scientific methods.\r\nHowever, I will only say at the present stage that your problem does not\r\nappear to me to be insoluble, and that you may expect to find us at\r\nVictoria at two o’clock.”\n\nIt was evening of a dull, foggy November day when, having left our\r\nbags at the Chequers, Lamberley, we drove through the Sussex clay of a\r\nlong winding lane and finally reached the isolated and ancient farmhouse\r\nin which Ferguson dwelt. It was a large, straggling building, very old\r\nin the centre, very new at the wings with towering Tudor chimneys and a\r\nlichen-spotted, high-pitched roof of Horsham slabs. The doorsteps were\r\nworn into curves, and the ancient tiles which lined the porch were\r\nmarked with the rebus of a cheese and a man after the original builder.\r\nWithin, the ceilings were corrugated with heavy oaken beams, and the\r\nuneven floors sagged into sharp curves. An odour of age and decay\r\npervaded the whole crumbling building.\n\nThere was one very large central room into which Ferguson led us.\r\nHere, in a huge old-fashioned fireplace with an iron screen behind it\r\ndated 1670, there blazed and spluttered a splendid log fire.\n\nThe room, as I gazed round, was a most singular mixture of dates and\r\nof places. The half-panelled walls may well have belonged to the\r\noriginal yeoman farmer of the seventeenth century. They were ornamented,\r\nhowever, on the lower part by a line of well-chosen modern watercolours;\r\nwhile above, where yellow plaster took the place of oak, there was hung\r\na fine collection of South American utensils and weapons, which had been\r\nbrought, no doubt, by the Peruvian lady upstairs. Holmes rose, with that\r\nquick curiosity which sprang from his eager mind, and examined them with\r\nsome care. He returned with his eyes full of thought.\n\n“Hullo!” he cried. “Hullo!”\n\nA spaniel had lain in a basket in the corner. It came slowly forward\r\ntowards its master, walking with difficulty. Its hind legs moved\r\nirregularly and its tail was on the ground. It licked Ferguson’s\r\nhand.\n\n“What is it, Mr.\xa0Holmes?”\n\n“The dog. What’s the matter with it?”\n\n“That’s what puzzled the vet. A sort of paralysis. Spinal meningitis,\r\nhe thought. But it is passing. He’ll be all right soon\ufeff—won’t you,\r\nCarlo?”\n\nA shiver of assent passed through the drooping tail. The dog’s\r\nmournful eyes passed from one of us to the other. He knew that we were\r\ndiscussing his case.\n\n“Did it come on suddenly?”\n\n“In a single night.”\n\n“How long ago?”\n\n“It may have been four months ago.”\n\n“Very remarkable. Very suggestive.”\n\n“What do you see in it, Mr.\xa0Holmes?”\n\n“A confirmation of what I had already thought.”\n\n“For God’s sake, what do you think, Mr.\xa0Holmes?\r\nIt may be a mere intellectual puzzle to you, but it is life and death to\r\nme! My wife a would-be murderer\ufeff—my child in constant danger! Don’t play\r\nwith me, Mr.\xa0Holmes. It is too terribly serious.”\n\nThe big Rugby three-quarter was trembling all over. Holmes put his\r\nhand soothingly upon his arm.\n\n“I fear that there is pain for you, Mr.\xa0Ferguson,\r\nwhatever the solution may be,” said he. “I would spare you all I can. I\r\ncannot say more for the instant, but before I leave this house I hope I\r\nmay have something definite.”\n\n“Please God you may! If you will excuse me, gentlemen, I will go up\r\nto my wife’s room and see if there has been any change.”\n\nHe was away some minutes, during which Holmes resumed his examination\r\nof the curiosities upon the wall. When our host returned it was clear\r\nfrom his downcast face that he had made no progress. He brought with him\r\na tall, slim, brown-faced girl.\n\n“The tea is ready, Dolores,” said Ferguson. “See that your mistress\r\nhas everything she can wish.”\n\n“She verra ill,” cried the girl, looking with indignant eyes at her\r\nmaster. “She no ask for food. She verra ill. She need doctor. I\r\nfrightened stay alone with her without doctor.”\n\nFerguson looked at me with a question in his eyes.\n\n“I should be so glad if I could be of use.”\n\n“Would your mistress see Dr.\xa0Watson?”\n\n“I take him. I no ask leave. She needs doctor.”\n\n“Then I’ll come with you at once.”\n\nI followed the girl, who was quivering with strong emotion, up the\r\nstaircase and down an ancient corridor. At the end was an iron-clamped\r\nand massive door. It struck me as I looked at it that if Ferguson tried\r\nto force his way to his wife he would find it no easy matter. The girl\r\ndrew a key from her pocket, and the heavy oaken planks creaked upon\r\ntheir old hinges. I passed in and she swiftly followed, fastening the\r\ndoor behind her.\n\nOn the bed a woman was lying who was clearly in a high fever. She was\r\nonly half conscious, but as I entered she raised a pair of frightened\r\nbut beautiful eyes and glared at me in apprehension. Seeing a stranger,\r\nshe appeared to be relieved and sank back with a sigh upon the pillow. I\r\nstepped up to her with a few reassuring words, and she lay still while I\r\ntook her pulse and temperature. Both were high, and yet my impression\r\nwas that the condition was rather that of mental and nervous excitement\r\nthan of any actual seizure.\n\n“She lie like that one day, two day. I ’fraid she die,” said the\r\ngirl.\n\nThe woman turned her flushed and handsome face towards me.\n\n“Where is my husband?”\n\n“He is below and would wish to see you.”\n\n“I will not see him. I will not see him.” Then she seemed to wander\r\noff into delirium. “A fiend! A fiend! Oh, what shall I do with this\r\ndevil?”\n\n“Can I help you in any way?”\n\n“No. No one can help. It is finished. All is destroyed. Do what I\r\nwill, all is destroyed.”\n\nThe woman must have some strange delusion. I could not see honest Bob\r\nFerguson in the character of fiend or devil.\n\n“Madame,” I said, “your husband loves you dearly. He is deeply\r\ngrieved at this happening.”\n\nAgain she turned on me those glorious eyes.\n\n“He loves me. Yes. But do I not love him? Do I not love him even to\r\nsacrifice myself rather than break his dear heart? That is how I love\r\nhim. And yet he could think of me\ufeff—he could speak of me so.”\n\n“He is full of grief, but he cannot understand.”\n\n“No, he cannot understand. But he should trust.”\n\n“Will you not see him?” I suggested.\n\n“No, no, I cannot forget those terrible words nor the look upon his\r\nface. I will not see him. Go now. You can do nothing for me. Tell him\r\nonly one thing. I want my child. I have a right to my child. That is the\r\nonly message I can send him.” She turned her face to the wall and would\r\nsay no more.\n\nI returned to the room downstairs, where Ferguson and Holmes still\r\nsat by the fire. Ferguson listened moodily to my account of the\r\ninterview.\n\n“How can I send her the child?” he said. “How do I know what strange\r\nimpulse might come upon her? How can I ever forget how she rose from\r\nbeside it with its blood upon her lips?” He shuddered at the\r\nrecollection. “The child is safe with Mrs.\xa0Mason, and there\r\nhe must remain.”\n\nA smart maid, the only modern thing which we had seen in the house,\r\nhad brought in some tea. As she was serving it the door opened and a\r\nyouth entered the room. He was a remarkable lad, pale-faced and\r\nfair-haired, with excitable light blue eyes which blazed into a sudden\r\nflame of emotion and joy as they rested upon his father. He rushed\r\nforward and threw his arms round his neck with the abandon of a loving\r\ngirl.\n\n“Oh, daddy,” he cried, “I did not know that you were due yet. I\r\nshould have been here to meet you. Oh, I am so glad to see you!”\n\nFerguson gently disengaged himself from the embrace with some little\r\nshow of embarrassment.\n\n“Dear old chap,” said he, patting the flaxen head with a very tender\r\nhand. “I came early because my friends, Mr.\xa0Holmes and\r\nDr.\xa0Watson, have been persuaded to come down and spend an\r\nevening with us.”\n\n“Is that Mr.\xa0Holmes, the detective?”\n\n“Yes.”\n\nThe youth looked at us with a very penetrating and, as it seemed to\r\nme, unfriendly gaze.\n\n“What about your other child, Mr.\xa0Ferguson?” asked\r\nHolmes. “Might we make the acquaintance of the baby?”\n\n“Ask Mrs.\xa0Mason to bring baby down,” said Ferguson. The\r\nboy went off with a curious, shambling gait which told my surgical eyes\r\nthat he was suffering from a weak spine. Presently he returned, and\r\nbehind him came a tall, gaunt woman bearing in her arms a very beautiful\r\nchild, dark-eyed, golden-haired, a wonderful mixture of the Saxon and\r\nthe Latin. Ferguson was evidently devoted to it, for he took it into his\r\narms and fondled it most tenderly.\n\n“Fancy anyone having the heart to hurt him,” he muttered as he\r\nglanced down at the small, angry red pucker upon the cherub throat.\n\nIt was at this moment that I chanced to glance at Holmes and saw a\r\nmost singular intentness in his expression. His face was as set as if it\r\nhad been carved out of old ivory, and his eyes, which had glanced for a\r\nmoment at father and child, were now fixed with eager curiosity upon\r\nsomething at the other side of the room. Following his gaze I could only\r\nguess that he was looking out through the window at the melancholy,\r\ndripping garden. It is true that a shutter had half closed outside and\r\nobstructed the view, but none the less it was certainly at the window\r\nthat Holmes was fixing his concentrated attention. Then he smiled, and\r\nhis eyes came back to the baby. On its chubby neck there was this small\r\npuckered mark. Without speaking, Holmes examined it with care. Finally\r\nhe shook one of the dimpled fists which waved in front of him.\n\n“Goodbye, little man. You have made a strange start in life. Nurse, I\r\nshould wish to have a word with you in private.”\n\nHe took her aside and spoke earnestly for a few minutes. I only heard\r\nthe last words, which were: “Your anxiety will soon, I hope, be set at\r\nrest.” The woman, who seemed to be a sour, silent kind of creature,\r\nwithdrew with the child.\n\n“What is Mrs.\xa0Mason like?” asked Holmes.\n\n“Not very prepossessing externally, as you can see, but a heart of\r\ngold, and devoted to the child.”\n\n“Do you like her, Jack?” Holmes turned suddenly upon the boy. His\r\nexpressive mobile face shadowed over, and he shook his head.\n\n“Jacky has very strong likes and dislikes,” said Ferguson, putting\r\nhis arm round the boy. “Luckily I am one of his likes.”\n\nThe boy cooed and nestled his head upon his father’s breast. Ferguson\r\ngently disengaged him.\n\n“Run away, little Jacky,” said he, and he watched his son with loving\r\neyes until he disappeared. “Now, Mr.\xa0Holmes,” he continued\r\nwhen the boy was gone, “I really feel that I have brought you on a\r\nfool’s errand, for what can you possibly do save give me your sympathy?\r\nIt must be an exceedingly delicate and complex affair from your point of\r\nview.”\n\n“It is certainly delicate,” said my friend with an amused smile, “but\r\nI have not been struck up to now with its complexity. It has been a case\r\nfor intellectual deduction, but when this original intellectual\r\ndeduction is confirmed point by point by quite a number of independent\r\nincidents, then the subjective becomes objective and we can say\r\nconfidently that we have reached our goal. I had, in fact, reached it\r\nbefore we left Baker Street, and the rest has merely been observation\r\nand confirmation.”\n\nFerguson put his big hand to his furrowed forehead.\n\n“For heaven’s sake, Holmes,” he said hoarsely; “if you can see the\r\ntruth in this matter, do not keep me in suspense. How do I stand? What\r\nshall I do? I care nothing as to how you have found your facts so long\r\nas you have really got them.”\n\n“Certainly I owe you an explanation, and you shall have it. But you\r\nwill permit me to handle the matter in my own way? Is the lady capable\r\nof seeing us, Watson?”\n\n“She is ill, but she is quite rational.”\n\n“Very good. It is only in her presence that we can clear the matter\r\nup. Let us go up to her.”\n\n“She will not see me,” cried Ferguson.\n\n“Oh, yes, she will,” said Holmes. He scribbled a few lines upon a\r\nsheet of paper. “You at least have the entrée, Watson. Will you have the\r\ngoodness to give the lady this note?”\n\nI ascended again and handed the note to Dolores, who cautiously\r\nopened the door. A minute later I heard a cry from within, a cry in\r\nwhich joy and surprise seemed to be blended. Dolores looked out.\n\n“She will see them. She will leesten,” said she.\n\nAt my summons Ferguson and Holmes came up. As we entered the room\r\nFerguson took a step or two towards his wife, who had raised herself in\r\nthe bed, but she held out her hand to repulse him. He sank into an\r\narmchair, while Holmes seated himself beside him, after bowing to the\r\nlady, who looked at him with wide-eyed amazement.\n\n“I think we can dispense with Dolores,” said Holmes. “Oh, very well,\r\nmadame, if you would rather she stayed I can see no objection. Now,\r\nMr.\xa0Ferguson, I am a busy man with many calls, and my\r\nmethods have to be short and direct. The swiftest surgery is the least\r\npainful. Let me first say what will ease your mind. Your wife is a very\r\ngood, a very loving, and a very ill-used woman.”\n\nFerguson sat up with a cry of joy.\n\n“Prove that, Mr.\xa0Holmes, and I am your debtor\r\nforever.”\n\n“I will do so, but in doing so I must wound you deeply in another\r\ndirection.”\n\n“I care nothing so long as you clear my wife. Everything on earth is\r\ninsignificant compared to that.”\n\n“Let me tell you, then, the train of reasoning which passed through\r\nmy mind in Baker Street. The idea of a vampire was to me absurd. Such\r\nthings do not happen in criminal practice in England. And yet your\r\nobservation was precise. You had seen the lady rise from beside the\r\nchild’s cot with the blood upon her lips.”\n\n“I did.”\n\n“Did it not occur to you that a bleeding wound may be sucked for some\r\nother purpose than to draw the blood from it? Was there not a queen in\r\nEnglish history who sucked such a wound to draw poison from it?”\n\n“Poison!”\n\n“A South American household. My instinct felt the presence of those\r\nweapons upon the wall before my eyes ever saw them. It might have been\r\nother poison, but that was what occurred to me. When I saw that little\r\nempty quiver beside the small birdbow, it was just what I expected to\r\nsee. If the child were pricked with one of those arrows dipped in curare\r\nor some other devilish drug, it would mean death if the venom were not\r\nsucked out.\n\n“And the dog! If one were to use such a poison, would one not try it\r\nfirst in order to see that it had not lost its power? I did not foresee\r\nthe dog, but at least I understand him and he fitted into my\r\nreconstruction.\n\n“Now do you understand? Your wife feared such an attack. She saw it\r\nmade and saved the child’s life, and yet she shrank from telling you all\r\nthe truth, for she knew how you loved the boy and feared lest it break\r\nyour heart.”\n\n“Jacky!”\n\n“I watched him as you fondled the child just now. His face was\r\nclearly reflected in the glass of the window where the shutter formed a\r\nbackground. I saw such jealousy, such cruel hatred, as I have seldom\r\nseen in a human face.”\n\n“My Jacky!”\n\n“You have to face it, Mr.\xa0Ferguson. It is the more\r\npainful because it is a distorted love, a maniacal exaggerated love for\r\nyou, and possibly for his dead mother, which has prompted his action.\r\nHis very soul is consumed with hatred for this splendid child, whose\r\nhealth and beauty are a contrast to his own weakness.”\n\n“Good God! It is incredible!”\n\n“Have I spoken the truth, madame?”\n\nThe lady was sobbing, with her face buried in the pillows. Now she\r\nturned to her husband.\n\n“How could I tell you, Bob? I felt the blow it would be to you. It\r\nwas better that I should wait and that it should come from some other\r\nlips than mine. When this gentleman, who seems to have powers of magic,\r\nwrote that he knew all, I was glad.”\n\n“I think a year at sea would be my prescription for Master Jacky,”\r\nsaid Holmes, rising from his chair. “Only one thing is still clouded,\r\nmadame. We can quite understand your attacks upon Master Jacky. There is\r\na limit to a mother’s patience. But how did you dare to leave the child\r\nthese last two days?”\n\n“I had told Mrs.\xa0Mason. She knew.”\n\n“Exactly. So I imagined.”\n\nFerguson was standing by the bed, choking, his hands outstretched and\r\nquivering.\n\n“This, I fancy, is the time for our exit, Watson,” said Holmes in a\r\nwhisper. “If you will take one elbow of the too faithful Dolores, I will\r\ntake the other. There, now,” he added as he closed the door behind him,\r\n“I think we may leave them to settle the rest among themselves.”\n\nI have only one further note of this case. It is the letter which\r\nHolmes wrote in final answer to that with which the narrative begins. It\r\nran thus:\n\nBaker Street Nov. 21st\n\nRe Vampires\n\nSir:\n\nReferring to your letter of the 19th, I beg to state that I have\r\nlooked into the inquiry of your client, Mr.\xa0Robert\r\nFerguson, of Ferguson and Muirhead, tea brokers, of Mincing Lane, and\r\nthat the matter has been brought to a satisfactory conclusion. With\r\nthanks for your recommendation,\n\nI am, sir,\r\nFaithfully yours,\n\nSherlock Holmes\n\nThe Adventure of the Three Garridebs\n\nIt may have been a comedy, or it may have been a tragedy. It cost one\r\nman his reason, it cost me a bloodletting, and it cost yet another man\r\nthe penalties of the law. Yet there was certainly an element of comedy.\r\nWell, you shall judge for yourselves.\n\nI remember the date very well, for it was in the same month that\r\nHolmes refused a knighthood for services which may perhaps some day be\r\ndescribed. I only refer to the matter in passing, for in my position of\r\npartner and confidant I am obliged to be particularly careful to avoid\r\nany indiscretion. I repeat, however, that this enables me to fix the\r\ndate, which was the latter end of June, 1902, shortly after the\r\nconclusion of the South African War. Holmes had spent several days in\r\nbed, as was his habit from time to time, but he emerged that morning\r\nwith a long foolscap document in his hand and a twinkle of amusement in\r\nhis austere gray eyes.\n\n“There is a chance for you to make some money, friend Watson,” said\r\nhe. “Have you ever heard the name of Garrideb?”\n\nI admitted that I had not.\n\n“Well, if you can lay your hand upon a Garrideb, there’s money in\r\nit.”\n\n“Why?”\n\n“Ah, that’s a long story\ufeff—rather a whimsical one, too. I don’t think\r\nin all our explorations of human complexities we have ever come upon\r\nanything more singular. The fellow will be here presently for\r\ncross-examination, so I won’t open the matter up till he comes. But,\r\nmeanwhile, that’s the name we want.”\n\nThe telephone directory lay on the table beside me, and I turned over\r\nthe pages in a rather hopeless quest. But to my amazement there was this\r\nstrange name in its due place. I gave a cry of triumph.\n\n“Here you are, Holmes! Here it is!”\n\nHolmes took the book from my hand.\n\n“\u200a‘Garrideb, N.,’\u200a” he read, “\u200a‘136 Little Ryder Street, W.’ Sorry to\r\ndisappoint you, my dear Watson, but this is the man himself. That is the\r\naddress upon his letter. We want another to match him.”\n\nMrs.\xa0Hudson had come in with a card upon a tray. I took\r\nit up and glanced at it.\n\n“Why, here it is!” I cried in amazement. “This is a different\r\ninitial. John Garrideb, Counsellor at Law, Moorville, Kansas,\r\nU.S.A.”\n\nHolmes smiled as he looked at the card. “I am afraid you must make\r\nyet another effort, Watson,” said he. “This gentleman is also in the\r\nplot already, though I certainly did not expect to see him this morning.\r\nHowever, he is in a position to tell us a good deal which I want to\r\nknow.”\n\nA moment later he was in the room. Mr.\xa0John Garrideb,\r\nCounsellor at Law, was a short, powerful man with the round, fresh,\r\nclean-shaven face characteristic of so many American men of affairs. The\r\ngeneral effect was chubby and rather childlike, so that one received the\r\nimpression of quite a young man with a broad set smile upon his face.\r\nHis eyes, however, were arresting. Seldom in any human head have I seen\r\na pair which bespoke a more intense inward life, so bright were they, so\r\nalert, so responsive to every change of thought. His accent was\r\nAmerican, but was not accompanied by any eccentricity of speech.\n\n“Mr.\xa0Holmes?” he asked, glancing from one to the other.\r\n“Ah, yes! Your pictures are not unlike you, sir, if I may say so. I\r\nbelieve you have had a letter from my namesake, Mr.\xa0Nathan\r\nGarrideb, have you not?”\n\n“Pray sit down,” said Sherlock Holmes. “We shall, I fancy, have a\r\ngood deal to discuss.” He took up his sheets of foolscap. “You are, of\r\ncourse, the Mr.\xa0John Garrideb mentioned in this document.\r\nBut surely you have been in England some time?”\n\n“Why do you say that, Mr.\xa0Holmes?” I seemed to read\r\nsudden suspicion in those expressive eyes.\n\n“Your whole outfit is English.”\n\nMr.\xa0Garrideb forced a laugh. “I’ve read of your tricks,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes, but I never thought I would be the subject of\r\nthem. Where do you read that?”\n\n“The shoulder cut of your coat, the toes of your boots\ufeff—could anyone\r\ndoubt it?”\n\n“Well, well, I had no idea I was so obvious a Britisher. But business\r\nbrought me over here some time ago, and so, as you say, my outfit is\r\nnearly all London. However, I guess your time is of value, and we did\r\nnot meet to talk about the cut of my socks. What about getting down to\r\nthat paper you hold in your hand?”\n\nHolmes had in some way ruffled our visitor, whose chubby face had\r\nassumed a far less amiable expression.\n\n“Patience! Patience, Mr.\xa0Garrideb!” said my friend in a\r\nsoothing voice. “Dr.\xa0Watson would tell you that these\r\nlittle digressions of mine sometimes prove in the end to have some\r\nbearing on the matter. But why did Mr.\xa0Nathan Garrideb not\r\ncome with you?”\n\n“Why did he ever drag you into it at all?” asked our visitor with a\r\nsudden outflame of anger. “What in thunder had you to do with it? Here\r\nwas a bit of professional business between two gentlemen, and one of\r\nthem must needs call in a detective! I saw him this morning, and he told\r\nme this fool-trick he had played me, and that’s why I am here. But I\r\nfeel bad about it, all the same.”\n\n“There was no reflection upon you, Mr.\xa0Garrideb. It was\r\nsimply zeal upon his part to gain your end\ufeff—an end which is, I\r\nunderstand, equally vital for both of you. He knew that I had means of\r\ngetting information, and, therefore, it was very natural that he should\r\napply to me.”\n\nOur visitor’s angry face gradually cleared.\n\n“Well, that puts it different,” said he. “When I went to see him this\r\nmorning and he told me he had sent to a detective, I just asked for your\r\naddress and came right away. I don’t want police butting into a private\r\nmatter. But if you are content just to help us find the man, there can\r\nbe no harm in that.”\n\n“Well, that is just how it stands,” said Holmes. “And now, sir, since\r\nyou are here, we had best have a clear account from your own lips. My\r\nfriend here knows nothing of the details.”\n\nMr.\xa0Garrideb surveyed me with not too friendly a\r\ngaze.\n\n“Need he know?” he asked.\n\n“We usually work together.”\n\n“Well, there’s no reason it should be kept a secret. I’ll give you\r\nthe facts as short as I can make them. If you came from Kansas I would\r\nnot need to explain to you who Alexander Hamilton Garrideb was. He made\r\nhis money in real estate, and afterwards in the wheat pit at Chicago,\r\nbut he spent it in buying up as much land as would make one of your\r\ncounties, lying along the Arkansas River, west of Fort Dodge. It’s\r\ngrazing-land and lumber-land and arable-land and mineralized-land, and\r\njust every sort of land that brings dollars to the man that owns it.\n\n“He had no kith nor kin\ufeff—or, if he had, I never heard of it. But he\r\ntook a kind of pride in the queerness of his name. That was what brought\r\nus together. I was in the law at Topeka, and one day I had a visit from\r\nthe old man, and he was tickled to death to meet another man with his\r\nown name. It was his pet fad, and he was dead set to find out if there\r\nwere any more Garridebs in the world. ‘Find me another!’ said he. I told\r\nhim I was a busy man and could not spend my life hiking round the world\r\nin search of Garridebs. ‘None the less,’ said he, ‘that is just what you\r\nwill do if things pan out as I planned them.’ I thought he was joking,\r\nbut there was a powerful lot of meaning in the words, as I was soon to\r\ndiscover.\n\n“For he died within a year of saying them, and he left a will behind\r\nhim. It was the queerest will that has ever been filed in the State of\r\nKansas. His property was divided into three parts and I was to have one\r\non condition that I found two Garridebs who would share the remainder.\r\nIt’s five million dollars for each if it is a cent, but we can’t lay a\r\nfinger on it until we all three stand in a row.\n\n“It was so big a chance that I just let my legal practice slide and I\r\nset forth looking for Garridebs. There is not one in the United States.\r\nI went through it, sir, with a fine-toothed comb and never a Garrideb\r\ncould I catch. Then I tried the old country. Sure enough there was the\r\nname in the London telephone directory. I went after him two days ago\r\nand explained the whole matter to him. But he is a lone man, like\r\nmyself, with some women relations, but no men. It says three adult men\r\nin the will. So you see we still have a vacancy, and if you can help to\r\nfill it we will be very ready to pay your charges.”\n\n“Well, Watson,” said Holmes with a smile, “l said it was rather\r\nwhimsical, did I not? I should have thought, sir, that your obvious way\r\nwas to advertise in the agony columns of the papers.”\n\n“I have done that, Mr.\xa0Holmes. No replies.”\n\n“Dear me! Well, it is certainly a most curious little problem. I may\r\ntake a glance at it in my leisure. By the way, it is curious that you\r\nshould have come from Topeka. I used to have a correspondent\ufeff—he is dead\r\nnow\ufeff—old Dr.\xa0Lysander Starr, who was mayor in 1890.”\n\n“Good old Dr.\xa0Starr!” said our visitor. “His name is\r\nstill honoured. Well, Mr.\xa0Holmes, I suppose all we can do\r\nis to report to you and let you know how we progress. I reckon you will\r\nhear within a day or two.” With this assurance our American bowed and\r\ndeparted.\n\nHolmes had lit his pipe, and he sat for some time with a curious\r\nsmile upon his face.\n\n“Well?” I asked at last.\n\n“I am wondering, Watson\ufeff—just wondering!”\n\n“At what?”\n\nHolmes took his pipe from his lips.\n\n“I was wondering, Watson, what on earth could be the object of this\r\nman in telling us such a rigmarole of lies. I nearly asked him so\ufeff—for\r\nthere are times when a brutal frontal attack is the best policy\ufeff—but I\r\njudged it better to let him think he had fooled us. Here is a man with\r\nan English coat frayed at the elbow and trousers bagged at the knee with\r\na year’s wear, and yet by this document and by his own account he is a\r\nprovincial American lately landed in London. There have been no\r\nadvertisements in the agony columns. You know that I miss nothing there.\r\nThey are my favourite covert for putting up a bird, and I would never\r\nhave overlooked such a cock pheasant as that. I never knew a\r\nDr.\xa0Lysander Starr, of Topeka. Touch him where you would he\r\nwas false. I think the fellow is really an American, but he has worn his\r\naccent smooth with years of London. What is his game, then, and what\r\nmotive lies behind this preposterous search for Garridebs? It’s worth\r\nour attention, for, granting that the man is a rascal, he is certainly a\r\ncomplex and ingenious one. We must now find out if our other\r\ncorrespondent is a fraud also. Just ring him up, Watson.”\n\nI did so, and heard a thin, quavering voice at the other end of the\r\nline.\n\n“Yes, yes, I am Mr.\xa0Nathan Garrideb. Is\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes there? I should very much like to have a word\r\nwith Mr.\xa0Holmes.”\n\nMy friend took the instrument and I heard the usual syncopated\r\ndialogue.\n\n“Yes, he has been here. I understand that you don’t know him.\ufeff\u200a\ufeff… How\r\nlong?\ufeff\u200a\ufeff… Only two days!\ufeff\u200a\ufeff… Yes, yes, of course, it is a most captivating\r\nprospect. Will you be at home this evening? I suppose your namesake will\r\nnot be there?\ufeff\u200a\ufeff… Very good, we will come then, for I would rather have a\r\nchat without him.\ufeff\u200a\ufeff… Dr.\xa0Watson will come with me.\ufeff\u200a\ufeff… I\r\nunderstand from your note that you did not go out often.\ufeff\u200a\ufeff… Well, we\r\nshall be round about six. You need not mention it to the American\r\nlawyer.\ufeff\u200a\ufeff… Very good. Goodbye!”\n\nIt was twilight of a lovely spring evening, and even Little Ryder\r\nStreet, one of the smaller offshoots from the Edgware Road, within a\r\nstone-cast of old Tyburn Tree of evil memory, looked golden and\r\nwonderful in the slanting rays of the setting sun. The particular house\r\nto which we were directed was a large, old-fashioned, Early Georgian\r\nedifice, with a flat brick face broken only by two deep bay windows on\r\nthe ground floor. It was on this ground floor that our client lived,\r\nand, indeed, the low windows proved to be the front of the huge room in\r\nwhich he spent his waking hours. Holmes pointed as we passed to the\r\nsmall brass plate which bore the curious name.\n\n“Up some years, Watson,” he remarked, indicating its discoloured\r\nsurface. “It’s his real name, anyhow, and that is something to\r\nnote.”\n\nThe house had a common stair, and there were a number of names\r\npainted in the hall, some indicating offices and some private chambers.\r\nIt was not a collection of residential flats, but rather the abode of\r\nBohemian bachelors. Our client opened the door for us himself and\r\napologized by saying that the woman in charge left at four o’clock.\r\nMr.\xa0Nathan Garrideb proved to be a very tall, loosejointed,\r\nround-backed person, gaunt and bald, some sixty-odd years of age. He had\r\na cadaverous face, with the dull dead skin of a man to whom exercise was\r\nunknown. Large round spectacles and a small projecting goat’s beard\r\ncombined with his stooping attitude to give him an expression of peering\r\ncuriosity. The general effect, however, was amiable, though\r\neccentric.\n\nThe room was as curious as its occupant. It looked like a small\r\nmuseum. It was both broad and deep, with cupboards and cabinets all\r\nround, crowded with specimens, geological and anatomical. Cases of\r\nbutterflies and moths flanked each side of the entrance. A large table\r\nin the centre was littered with all sorts of debris, while the tall\r\nbrass tube of a powerful microscope bristled up among them. As I glanced\r\nround I was surprised at the universality of the man’s interests. Here\r\nwas a case of ancient coins. There was a cabinet of flint instruments.\r\nBehind his central table was a large cupboard of fossil bones. Above was\r\na line of plaster skulls with such names as “Neanderthal,” “Heidelberg,”\r\n“Cro-Magnon” printed beneath them. It was clear that he was a student of\r\nmany subjects. As he stood in front of us now, he held a piece of\r\nchamois leather in his right hand with which he was polishing a\r\ncoin.\n\n“Syracusan\ufeff—of the best period,” he explained, holding it up. “They\r\ndegenerated greatly towards the end. At their best I hold them supreme,\r\nthough some prefer the Alexandrian school. You will find a chair here,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes. Pray allow me to clear these bones. And you,\r\nsir\ufeff—ah, yes, Dr.\xa0Watson\ufeff—if you would have the goodness to\r\nput the Japanese vase to one side. You see round me my little interests\r\nin life. My doctor lectures me about never going out, but why should I\r\ngo out when I have so much to hold me here? I can assure you that the\r\nadequate cataloguing of one of those cabinets would take me three good\r\nmonths.”\n\nHolmes looked round him with curiosity.\n\n“But do you tell me that you never go out?” he said.\n\n“Now and again I drive down to Sotheby’s or Christie’s. Otherwise I\r\nvery seldom leave my room. I am not too strong, and my researches are\r\nvery absorbing. But you can imagine, Mr.\xa0Holmes, what a\r\nterrific shock\ufeff—pleasant but terrific\ufeff—it was for me when I heard of this\r\nunparalleled good fortune. It only needs one more Garrideb to complete\r\nthe matter, and surely we can find one. I had a brother, but he is dead,\r\nand female relatives are disqualified. But there must surely be others\r\nin the world. I had heard that you handled strange cases, and that was\r\nwhy I sent to you. Of course, this American gentleman is quite right,\r\nand I should have taken his advice first, but I acted for the best.”\n\n“I think you acted very wisely indeed,” said Holmes. “But are you\r\nreally anxious to acquire an estate in America?”\n\n“Certainly not, sir. Nothing would induce me to leave my collection.\r\nBut this gentleman has assured me that he will buy me out as soon as we\r\nhave established our claim. Five million dollars was the sum named.\r\nThere are a dozen specimens in the market at the present moment which\r\nfill gaps in my collection, and which I am unable to purchase for want\r\nof a few hundred pounds. Just think what I could do with five million\r\ndollars. Why, I have the nucleus of a national collection. I shall be\r\nthe Hans Sloane of my age.”\n\nHis eyes gleamed behind his great spectacles. It was very clear that\r\nno pains would be spared by Mr.\xa0Nathan Garrideb in finding\r\na namesake.\n\n“I merely called to make your acquaintance, and there is no reason\r\nwhy I should interrupt your studies,” said Holmes. “I prefer to\r\nestablish personal touch with those with whom I do business. There are\r\nfew questions I need ask, for I have your very clear narrative in my\r\npocket, and I filled up the blanks when this American gentleman called.\r\nI understand that up to this week you were unaware of his\r\nexistence.”\n\n“That is so. He called last Tuesday.”\n\n“Did he tell you of our interview today?”\n\n“Yes, he came straight back to me. He had been very angry.”\n\n“Why should he be angry?”\n\n“He seemed to think it was some reflection on his honour. But he was\r\nquite cheerful again when he returned.”\n\n“Did he suggest any course of action?”\n\n“No, sir, he did not.”\n\n“Has he had, or asked for, any money from you?”\n\n“No, sir, never!”\n\n“You see no possible object he has in view?”\n\n“None, except what he states.”\n\n“Did you tell him of our telephone appointment?”\n\n“Yes, sir, I did.”\n\nHolmes was lost in thought. I could see that he was puzzled.\n\n“Have you any articles of great value in your collection?”\n\n“No, sir. I am not a rich man. It is a good collection, but not a\r\nvery valuable one.”\n\n“You have no fear of burglars?”\n\n“Not the least.”\n\n“How long have you been in these rooms?”\n\n“Nearly five years.”\n\nHolmes’s cross-examination was interrupted by an imperative knocking\r\nat the door. No sooner had our client unlatched it than the American\r\nlawyer burst excitedly into the room.\n\n“Here you are!” he cried, waving a paper over his head. “I thought I\r\nshould be in time to get you. Mr.\xa0Nathan Garrideb, my\r\ncongratulations! You are a rich man, sir. Our business is happily\r\nfinished and all is well. As to you, Mr.\xa0Holmes, we can\r\nonly say we are sorry if we have given you any useless trouble.”\n\nHe handed over the paper to our client, who stood staring at a marked\r\nadvertisement. Holmes and I leaned forward and read it over his\r\nshoulder. This is how it ran:\n\nHoward Garrideb\r\nConstructor of Agricultural Machinery\n\nBinders, reapers, steam and hand plows, drills, harrows, farmer’s\r\ncarts, buckboards, and all other appliances. Estimates for Artesian\r\nWells.\n\nApply Grosvenor Buildings, Aston\n\n“Glorious!” gasped our host. “That makes our third man.”\n\n“I had opened up inquiries in Birmingham,” said the American, “and my\r\nagent there has sent me this advertisement from a local paper. We must\r\nhustle and put the thing through. I have written to this man and told\r\nhim that you will see him in his office tomorrow afternoon at four\r\no’clock.”\n\n“You want me to see him?”\n\n“What do you say, Mr.\xa0Holmes? Don’t you think it would\r\nbe wiser? Here am I, a wandering American with a wonderful tale. Why\r\nshould he believe what I tell him? But you are a Britisher with solid\r\nreferences, and he is bound to take notice of what you say. I would go\r\nwith you if you wished, but I have a very busy day tomorrow, and I could\r\nalways follow you if you are in any trouble.”\n\n“Well, I have not made such a journey for years.”\n\n“It is nothing, Mr.\xa0Garrideb. I have figured out our\r\nconnections. You leave at twelve and should be there soon after two.\r\nThen you can be back the same night. All you have to do is to see this\r\nman, explain the matter, and get an affidavit of his existence. By the\r\nLord!” he added hotly, “considering I’ve come all the way from the\r\ncentre of America, it is surely little enough if you go a hundred miles\r\nin order to put this matter through.”\n\n“Quite so,” said Holmes. “I think what this gentleman says is very\r\ntrue.”\n\nMr.\xa0Nathan Garrideb shrugged his shoulders with a\r\ndisconsolate air. “Well, if you insist I shall go,” said he. “It is\r\ncertainly hard for me to refuse you anything, considering the glory of\r\nhope that you have brought into my life.”\n\n“Then that is agreed,” said Holmes, “and no doubt you will let me\r\nhave a report as soon as you can.”\n\n“I’ll see to that,” said the American. “Well,” he added looking at\r\nhis watch, “I’ll have to get on. I’ll call tomorrow,\r\nMr.\xa0Nathan, and see you off to Birmingham. Coming my way,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes? Well, then, goodbye, and we may have good news\r\nfor you tomorrow night.”\n\nI noticed that my friend’s face cleared when the American left the\r\nroom, and the look of thoughtful perplexity had vanished.\n\n“I wish I could look over your collection,\r\nMr.\xa0Garrideb,” said he. “In my profession all sorts of odd\r\nknowledge comes useful, and this room of yours is a storehouse of\r\nit.”\n\nOur client shone with pleasure and his eyes gleamed from behind his\r\nbig glasses.\n\n“I had always heard, sir, that you were a very intelligent man,” said\r\nhe. “I could take you round now if you have the time.”\n\n“Unfortunately, I have not. But these specimens are so well labelled\r\nand classified that they hardly need your personal explanation. If I\r\nshould be able to look in tomorrow, I presume that there would be no\r\nobjection to my glancing over them?”\n\n“None at all. You are most welcome. The place will, of course, be\r\nshut up, but Mrs.\xa0Saunders is in the basement up to four\r\no’clock and would let you in with her key.”\n\n“Well, I happen to be clear tomorrow afternoon. If you would say a\r\nword to Mrs.\xa0Saunders it would be quite in order. By the\r\nway, who is your house-agent?”\n\nOur client was amazed at the sudden question.\n\n“Holloway and Steele, in the Edgware Road. But why?”\n\n“I am a bit of an archaeologist myself when it comes to houses,” said\r\nHolmes, laughing. “I was wondering if this was Queen Anne or\r\nGeorgian.”\n\n“Georgian, beyond doubt.”\n\n“Really. I should have thought a little earlier. However, it is\r\neasily ascertained. Well, goodbye, Mr.\xa0Garrideb, and may\r\nyou have every success in your Birmingham journey.”\n\nThe house-agent’s was close by, but we found that it was closed for\r\nthe day, so we made our way back to Baker Street. It was not till after\r\ndinner that Holmes reverted to the subject.\n\n“Our little problem draws to a close,” said he. “No doubt you have\r\noutlined the solution in your own mind.”\n\n“I can make neither head nor tail of it.”\n\n“The head is surely clear enough and the tail we should see tomorrow.\r\nDid you notice nothing curious about that advertisement?”\n\n“I saw that the word ‘plough’ was misspelt.”\n\n“Oh, you did notice that, did you? Come, Watson, you improve all the\r\ntime. Yes, it was bad English but good American. The printer had set it\r\nup as received. Then the buckboards. That is American also. And artesian\r\nwells are commoner with them than with us. It was a typical American\r\nadvertisement, but purporting to be from an English firm. What do you\r\nmake of that?”\n\n“I can only suppose that this American lawyer put it in himself. What\r\nhis object was I fail to understand.”\n\n“Well, there are alternative explanations. Anyhow, he wanted to get\r\nthis good old fossil up to Birmingham. That is very clear. I might have\r\ntold him that he was clearly going on a wild-goose chase, but, on second\r\nthoughts, it seemed better to clear the stage by letting him go.\r\nTomorrow, Watson\ufeff—well, tomorrow will speak for itself.”\n\nHolmes was up and out early. When he returned at lunchtime I noticed\r\nthat his face was very grave.\n\n“This is a more serious matter than I had expected, Watson,” said he.\r\n“It is fair to tell you so, though I know it will only be an additional\r\nreason to you for running your head into danger. I should know my Watson\r\nby now. But there is danger, and you should know it.”\n\n“Well, it is not the first we have shared, Holmes. I hope it may not\r\nbe the last. What is the particular danger this time?”\n\n“We are up against a very hard case. I have identified\r\nMr.\xa0John Garrideb, Counsellor at Law. He is none other than\r\n‘Killer’ Evans, of sinister and murderous reputation.”\n\n“I fear I am none the wiser.”\n\n“Ah, it is not part of your profession to carry about a portable\r\nNewgate Calendar in your memory. I have been down to see friend Lestrade\r\nat the Yard. There may be an occasional want of imaginative intuition\r\ndown there, but they lead the world for thoroughness and method. I had\r\nan idea that we might get on the track of our American friend in their\r\nrecords. Sure enough, I found his chubby face smiling up at me from the\r\nrogues’ portrait gallery. ‘James Winter, alias Morecroft, alias Killer\r\nEvans,’ was the inscription below.” Holmes drew an envelope from his\r\npocket. “I scribbled down a few points from his dossier: Aged\r\nforty-four. Native of Chicago. Known to have shot three men in the\r\nStates. Escaped from penitentiary through political influence. Came to\r\nLondon in 1893. Shot a man over cards in a nightclub in the Waterloo\r\nRoad in January, 1895. Man died, but he was shown to have been the\r\naggressor in the row. Dead man was identified as Rodger Prescott, famous\r\nas forger and coiner in Chicago. Killer Evans released in 1901. Has been\r\nunder police supervision since, but so far as known has led an honest\r\nlife. Very dangerous man, usually carries arms and is prepared to use\r\nthem. That is our bird, Watson\ufeff—a sporting bird, as you must admit.”\n\n“But what is his game?”\n\n“Well, it begins to define itself. I have been to the house-agent’s.\r\nOur client, as he told us, has been there five years. It was unlet for a\r\nyear before then. The previous tenant was a gentleman at large named\r\nWaldron. Waldron’s appearance was well remembered at the office. He had\r\nsuddenly vanished and nothing more been heard of him. He was a tall,\r\nbearded man with very dark features. Now, Prescott, the man whom Killer\r\nEvans had shot, was, according to Scotland Yard, a tall, dark man with a\r\nbeard. As a working hypothesis, I think we may take it that Prescott,\r\nthe American criminal, used to live in the very room which our innocent\r\nfriend now devotes to his museum. So at last we get a link, you\r\nsee.”\n\n“And the next link?”\n\n“Well, we must go now and look for that.”\n\nHe took a revolver from the drawer and handed it to me.\n\n“I have my old favourite with me. If our Wild West friend tries to\r\nlive up to his nickname, we must be ready for him. I’ll give you an hour\r\nfor a siesta, Watson, and then I think it will be time for our Ryder\r\nStreet adventure.”\n\nIt was just four o’clock when we reached the curious apartment of\r\nNathan Garrideb. Mrs.\xa0Saunders, the caretaker, was about to\r\nleave, but she had no hesitation in admitting us, for the door shut with\r\na spring lock, and Holmes promised to see that all was safe before we\r\nleft. Shortly afterwards the outer door closed, her bonnet passed the\r\nbow window, and we knew that we were alone in the lower floor of the\r\nhouse. Holmes made a rapid examination of the premises. There was one\r\ncupboard in a dark corner which stood out a little from the wall. It was\r\nbehind this that we eventually crouched while Holmes in a whisper\r\noutlined his intentions.\n\n“He wanted to get our amiable friend out of his room\ufeff—that is very\r\nclear, and, as the collector never went out, it took some planning to do\r\nit. The whole of this Garrideb invention was apparently for no other\r\nend. I must say, Watson, that there is a certain devilish ingenuity\r\nabout it, even if the queer name of the tenant did give him an opening\r\nwhich he could hardly have expected. He wove his plot with remarkable\r\ncunning.”\n\n“But what did he want?”\n\n“Well, that is what we are here to find out. It has nothing whatever\r\nto do with our client, so far as I can read the situation. It is\r\nsomething connected with the man he murdered\ufeff—the man who may have been\r\nhis confederate in crime. There is some guilty secret in the room. That\r\nis how I read it. At first I thought our friend might have something in\r\nhis collection more valuable than he knew\ufeff—something worth the attention\r\nof a big criminal. But the fact that Rodger Prescott of evil memory\r\ninhabited these rooms points to some deeper reason. Well, Watson, we can\r\nbut possess our souls in patience and see what the hour may bring.”\n\nThat hour was not long in striking. We crouched closer in the shadow\r\nas we heard the outer door open and shut. Then came the sharp, metallic\r\nsnap of a key, and the American was in the room. He closed the door\r\nsoftly behind him, took a sharp glance around him to see that all was\r\nsafe, threw off his overcoat, and walked up to the central table with\r\nthe brisk manner of one who knows exactly what he has to do and how to\r\ndo it. He pushed the table to one side, tore up the square of carpet on\r\nwhich it rested, rolled it completely back, and then, drawing a jemmy\r\nfrom his inside pocket, he knelt down and worked vigorously upon the\r\nfloor. Presently we heard the sound of sliding boards, and an instant\r\nlater a square had opened in the planks. Killer Evans struck a match,\r\nlit a stump of candle, and vanished from our view.\n\nClearly our moment had come. Holmes touched my wrist as a signal, and\r\ntogether we stole across to the open trap-door. Gently as we moved,\r\nhowever, the old floor must have creaked under our feet, for the head of\r\nour American, peering anxiously round, emerged suddenly from the open\r\nspace. His face turned upon us with a glare of baffled rage, which\r\ngradually softened into a rather shamefaced grin as he realized that two\r\npistols were pointed at his head.\n\n“Well, well!” said he coolly as he scrambled to the surface. “I guess\r\nyou have been one too many for me, Mr.\xa0Holmes. Saw through\r\nmy game, I suppose, and played me for a sucker from the first. Well,\r\nsir, I hand it to you; you have me beat and\ufeff—”\n\nIn an instant he had whisked out a revolver from his breast and had\r\nfired two shots. I felt a sudden hot sear as if a red-hot iron had been\r\npressed to my thigh. There was a crash as Holmes’s pistol came down on\r\nthe man’s head. I had a vision of him sprawling upon the floor with\r\nblood running down his face while Holmes rummaged him for weapons. Then\r\nmy friend’s wiry arms were round me, and he was leading me to a\r\nchair.\n\n“You’re not hurt, Watson? For God’s sake, say that you are not\r\nhurt!”\n\nIt was worth a wound\ufeff—it was worth many wounds\ufeff—to know the depth of\r\nloyalty and love which lay behind that cold mask. The clear, hard eyes\r\nwere dimmed for a moment, and the firm lips were shaking. For the one\r\nand only time I caught a glimpse of a great heart as well as of a great\r\nbrain. All my years of humble but single-minded service culminated in\r\nthat moment of revelation.\n\n“It’s nothing, Holmes. It’s a mere scratch.”\n\nHe had ripped up my trousers with his pocketknife.\n\n“You are right,” he cried with an immense sigh of relief. “It is\r\nquite superficial.” His face set like flint as he glared at our\r\nprisoner, who was sitting up with a dazed face. “By the Lord, it is as\r\nwell for you. If you had killed Watson, you would not have got out of\r\nthis room alive. Now, sir, what have you to say for yourself?”\n\nHe had nothing to say for himself. He only sat and scowled. I leaned\r\non Holmes’s arm, and together we looked down into the small cellar which\r\nhad been disclosed by the secret flap. It was still illuminated by the\r\ncandle which Evans had taken down with him. Our eyes fell upon a mass of\r\nrusted machinery, great rolls of paper, a litter of bottles, and, neatly\r\narranged upon a small table, a number of neat little bundles.\n\n“A printing press\ufeff—a counterfeiter’s outfit,” said Holmes.\n\n“Yes, sir,” said our prisoner, staggering slowly to his feet and then\r\nsinking into the chair. “The greatest counterfeiter London ever saw.\r\nThat’s Prescott’s machine, and those bundles on the table are two\r\nthousand of Prescott’s notes worth a hundred each and fit to pass\r\nanywhere. Help yourselves, gentlemen. Call it a deal and let me beat\r\nit.”\n\nHolmes laughed.\n\n“We don’t do things like that, Mr.\xa0Evans. There is no\r\nbolthole for you in this country. You shot this man Prescott, did you\r\nnot?”\n\n“Yes, sir, and got five years for it, though it was he who pulled on\r\nme. Five years\ufeff—when I should have had a medal the size of a soup plate.\r\nNo living man could tell a Prescott from a Bank of England, and if I\r\nhadn’t put him out he would have flooded London with them. I was the\r\nonly one in the world who knew where he made them. Can you wonder that I\r\nwanted to get to the place? And can you wonder that when I found this\r\ncrazy boob of a bug-hunter with the queer name squatting right on the\r\ntop of it, and never quitting his room, I had to do the best I could to\r\nshift him? Maybe I would have been wiser if I had put him away. It would\r\nhave been easy enough, but I’m a softhearted guy that can’t begin\r\nshooting unless the other man has a gun also. But say,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes, what have I done wrong, anyhow? I’ve not used\r\nthis plant. I’ve not hurt this old stiff. Where do you get me?”\n\n“Only attempted murder, so far as I can see,” said Holmes. “But\r\nthat’s not our job. They take that at the next stage. What we wanted at\r\npresent was just your sweet self. Please give the Yard a call, Watson.\r\nIt won’t be entirely unexpected.”\n\nSo those were the facts about Killer Evans and his remarkable\r\ninvention of the three Garridebs. We heard later that our poor old\r\nfriend never got over the shock of his dissipated dreams. When his\r\ncastle in the air fell down, it buried him beneath the ruins. He was\r\nlast heard of at a nursing-home in Brixton. It was a glad day at the\r\nYard when the Prescott outfit was discovered, for, though they knew that\r\nit existed, they had never been able, after the death of the man, to\r\nfind out where it was. Evans had indeed done great service and caused\r\nseveral worthy C. I. D. men to sleep the sounder, for the\r\ncounterfeiter stands in a class by himself as a public danger. They\r\nwould willingly have subscribed to that soup-plate medal of which the\r\ncriminal had spoken, but an unappreciative bench took a less favourable\r\nview, and the Killer returned to those shades from which he had just\r\nemerged.\n\nThe Problem of Thor Bridge\n\nSomewhere in the vaults of the bank of Cox and Co., at\r\nCharing Cross, there is a travel-worn and battered tin dispatch-box with\r\nmy name, John H. Watson, M.\r\nD., Late Indian Army, painted upon the lid. It is crammed with\r\npapers, nearly all of which are records of cases to illustrate the\r\ncurious problems which Mr.\xa0Sherlock Holmes had at various\r\ntimes to examine. Some, and not the least interesting, were complete\r\nfailures, and as such will hardly bear narrating, since no final\r\nexplanation is forthcoming. A problem without a solution may interest\r\nthe student, but can hardly fail to annoy the casual reader. Among these\r\nunfinished tales is that of Mr.\xa0James Phillimore, who,\r\nstepping back into his own house to get his umbrella, was never more\r\nseen in this world. No less remarkable is that of the cutter\r\nAlicia, which sailed one spring morning into a small patch of\r\nmist from where she never again emerged, nor was anything further ever\r\nheard of herself and her crew. A third case worthy of note is that of\r\nIsadora Persano, the well-known journalist and duellist, who was found\r\nstark staring mad with a match box in front of him which contained a\r\nremarkable worm said to be unknown to science. Apart from these\r\nunfathomed cases, there are some which involve the secrets of private\r\nfamilies to an extent which would mean consternation in many exalted\r\nquarters if it were thought possible that they might find their way into\r\nprint. I need not say that such a breach of confidence is unthinkable,\r\nand that these records will be separated and destroyed now that my\r\nfriend has time to turn his energies to the matter. There remain a\r\nconsiderable residue of cases of greater or less interest which I might\r\nhave edited before had I not feared to give the public a surfeit which\r\nmight react upon the reputation of the man whom above all others I\r\nrevere. In some I was myself concerned and can speak as an eyewitness,\r\nwhile in others I was either not present or played so small a part that\r\nthey could only be told as by a third person. The following narrative is\r\ndrawn from my own experience.\n\nIt was a wild morning in October, and I observed as I was dressing\r\nhow the last remaining leaves were being whirled from the solitary plane\r\ntree which graces the yard behind our house. I descended to breakfast\r\nprepared to find my companion in depressed spirits, for, like all great\r\nartists, he was easily impressed by his surroundings. On the contrary, I\r\nfound that he had nearly finished his meal, and that his mood was\r\nparticularly bright and joyous, with that somewhat sinister cheerfulness\r\nwhich was characteristic of his lighter moments.\n\n“You have a case, Holmes?” I remarked.\n\n“The faculty of deduction is certainly contagious, Watson,” he\r\nanswered. “It has enabled you to probe my secret. Yes, I have a case.\r\nAfter a month of trivialities and stagnation the wheels move once\r\nmore.”\n\n“Might I share it?”\n\n“There is little to share, but we may discuss it when you have\r\nconsumed the two hard-boiled eggs with which our new cook has favoured\r\nus. Their condition may not be unconnected with the copy of the\r\nFamily Herald which I observed yesterday upon the hall-table.\r\nEven so trivial a matter as cooking an egg demands an attention which is\r\nconscious of the passage of time and incompatible with the love romance\r\nin that excellent periodical.”\n\nA quarter of an hour later the table had been cleared and we were\r\nface to face. He had drawn a letter from his pocket.\n\n“You have heard of Neil Gibson, the Gold King?” he said.\n\n“You mean the American Senator?”\n\n“Well, he was once Senator for some Western state, but is better\r\nknown as the greatest gold-mining magnate in the world.”\n\n“Yes, I know of him. He has surely lived in England for some time.\r\nHis name is very familiar.”\n\n“Yes, he bought a considerable estate in Hampshire some five years\r\nago. Possibly you have already heard of the tragic end of his wife?”\n\n“Of course. I remember it now. That is why the name is familiar. But\r\nI really know nothing of the details.”\n\nHolmes waved his hand towards some papers on a chair. “I had no idea\r\nthat the case was coming my way or I should have had my extracts ready,”\r\nsaid he. “The fact is that the problem, though exceedingly sensational,\r\nappeared to present no difficulty. The interesting personality of the\r\naccused does not obscure the clearness of the evidence. That was the\r\nview taken by the coroner’s jury and also in the police-court\r\nproceedings. It is now referred to the Assizes at Winchester. I fear it\r\nis a thankless business. I can discover facts, Watson, but I cannot\r\nchange them. Unless some entirely new and unexpected ones come to light\r\nI do not see what my client can hope for.”\n\n“Your client?”\n\n“Ah, I forgot I had not told you. I am getting into your involved\r\nhabit, Watson, of telling a story backward. You had best read this\r\nfirst.”\n\nThe letter which he handed to me, written in a bold, masterful hand,\r\nran as follows:\n\nClaridge’s Hotel, October 3rd\n\nDear Mr.\xa0Sherlock\r\nHolmes:\n\nI can’t see the best woman God ever made go to her death without\r\ndoing all that is possible to save her. I can’t explain things\ufeff—I can’t\r\neven try to explain them, but I know beyond all doubt that Miss Dunbar\r\nis innocent. You know the facts\ufeff—who doesn’t? It has been the gossip of\r\nthe country. And never a voice raised for her! It’s the damned injustice\r\nof it all that makes me crazy. That woman has a heart that wouldn’t let\r\nher kill a fly. Well, I’ll come at eleven tomorrow and see if you can\r\nget some ray of light in the dark. Maybe I have a clue and don’t know\r\nit. Anyhow, all I know and all I have and all I am are for your use if\r\nonly you can save her. If ever in your life you showed your powers, put\r\nthem now into this case.\n\nYours faithfully,\n\nJ. Neil Gibson\n\n“There you have it,” said Sherlock Holmes, knocking out the ashes of\r\nhis after-breakfast pipe and slowly refilling it. “That is the gentleman\r\nI await. As to the story, you have hardly time to master all these\r\npapers, so I must give it to you in a nutshell if you are to take an\r\nintelligent interest in the proceedings. This man is the greatest\r\nfinancial power in the world, and a man, as I understand, of most\r\nviolent and formidable character. He married a wife, the victim of this\r\ntragedy, of whom I know nothing save that she was past her prime, which\r\nwas the more unfortunate as a very attractive governess superintended\r\nthe education of two young children. These are the three people\r\nconcerned, and the scene is a grand old manor house, the centre of a\r\nhistorical English state. Then as to the tragedy. The wife was found in\r\nthe grounds nearly half a mile from the house, late at night, clad in\r\nher dinner dress, with a shawl over her shoulders and a revolver bullet\r\nthrough her brain. No weapon was found near her and there was no local\r\nclue as to the murder. No weapon near her, Watson\ufeff—mark that! The crime\r\nseems to have been committed late in the evening, and the body was found\r\nby a gamekeeper about eleven o’clock, when it was examined by the police\r\nand by a doctor before being carried up to the house. Is this too\r\ncondensed, or can you follow it clearly?”\n\n“It is all very clear. But why suspect the governess?”\n\n“Well, in the first place there is some very direct evidence. A\r\nrevolver with one discharged chamber and a calibre which corresponded\r\nwith the bullet was found on the floor of her wardrobe.” His eyes fixed\r\nand he repeated in broken words, “On\ufeff—the\ufeff—floor\ufeff—of\ufeff—her\ufeff—wardrobe.” Then he\r\nsank into silence, and I saw that some train of thought had been set\r\nmoving which I should be foolish to interrupt. Suddenly with a start he\r\nemerged into brisk life once more. “Yes, Watson, it was found. Pretty\r\ndamning, eh? So the two juries thought. Then the dead woman had a note\r\nupon her making an appointment at that very place and signed by the\r\ngoverness. How’s that? Finally there is the motive. Senator Gibson is an\r\nattractive person. If his wife dies, who more likely to succeed her than\r\nthe young lady who had already by all accounts received pressing\r\nattentions from her employer? Love, fortune, power, all depending upon\r\none middle-aged life. Ugly, Watson\ufeff—very ugly!”\n\n“Yes, indeed, Holmes.”\n\n“Nor could she prove an alibi. On the contrary, she had to admit that\r\nshe was down near Thor Bridge\ufeff—that was the scene of the tragedy\ufeff—about\r\nthat hour. She couldn’t deny it, for some passing villager had seen her\r\nthere.”\n\n“That really seems final.”\n\n“And yet, Watson\ufeff—and yet! This bridge\ufeff—a single broad span of stone\r\nwith balustraded sides\ufeff—carries the drive over the narrowest part of a\r\nlong, deep, reed-girt sheet of water. Thor Mere it is called. In the\r\nmouth of the bridge lay the dead woman. Such are the main facts. But\r\nhere, if I mistake not, is our client, considerably before his\r\ntime.”\n\nBilly had opened the door, but the name which he announced was an\r\nunexpected one. Mr.\xa0Marlow Bates was a stranger to both of\r\nus. He was a thin, nervous wisp of a man with frightened eyes and a\r\ntwitching, hesitating manner\ufeff—a man whom my own professional eye would\r\njudge to be on the brink of an absolute nervous breakdown.\n\n“You seem agitated, Mr.\xa0Bates,” said Holmes. “Pray sit\r\ndown. I fear I can only give you a short time, for I have an appointment\r\nat eleven.”\n\n“I know you have,” our visitor gasped, shooting out short sentences\r\nlike a man who is out of breath. “Mr.\xa0Gibson is coming.\r\nMr.\xa0Gibson is my employer. I am manager of his estate.\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes, he is a villain\ufeff—an infernal villain.”\n\n“Strong language, Mr.\xa0Bates.”\n\n“I have to be emphatic, Mr.\xa0Holmes, for the time is so\r\nlimited. I would not have him find me here for the world. He is almost\r\ndue now. But I was so situated that I could not come earlier. His\r\nsecretary, Mr.\xa0Ferguson, only told me this morning of his\r\nappointment with you.”\n\n“And you are his manager?”\n\n“I have given him notice. In a couple of weeks I shall have shaken\r\noff his accursed slavery. A hard man, Mr.\xa0Holmes, hard to\r\nall about him. Those public charities are a screen to cover his private\r\niniquities. But his wife was his chief victim. He was brutal to her\ufeff—yes,\r\nsir, brutal! How she came by her death I do not know, but I am sure that\r\nhe had made her life a misery to her. She was a creature of the tropics,\r\na Brazilian by birth, as no doubt you know.”\n\n“No, it had escaped me.”\n\n“Tropical by birth and tropical by nature. A child of the sun and of\r\npassion. She had loved him as such women can love, but when her own\r\nphysical charms had faded\ufeff—I am told that they once were great\ufeff—there was\r\nnothing to hold him. We all liked her and felt for her and hated him for\r\nthe way that he treated her. But he is plausible and cunning. That is\r\nall I have to say to you. Don’t take him at his face value. There is\r\nmore behind. Now I’ll go. No, no, don’t detain me! He is almost\r\ndue.”\n\nWith a frightened look at the clock our strange visitor literally ran\r\nto the door and disappeared.\n\n“Well! Well!” said Holmes after an interval of silence.\r\n“Mr.\xa0Gibson seems to have a nice loyal household. But the\r\nwarning is a useful one, and now we can only wait till the man himself\r\nappears.”\n\nSharp at the hour we heard a heavy step upon the stairs, and the\r\nfamous millionaire was shown into the room. As I looked upon him I\r\nunderstood not only the fears and dislike of his manager but also the\r\nexecrations which so many business rivals have heaped upon his head. If\r\nI were a sculptor and desired to idealize the successful man of affairs,\r\niron of nerve and leathery of conscience, I should choose\r\nMr.\xa0Neil Gibson as my model. His tall, gaunt, craggy figure\r\nhad a suggestion of hunger and rapacity. An Abraham Lincoln keyed to\r\nbase uses instead of high ones would give some idea of the man. His face\r\nmight have been chiselled in granite, hard-set, craggy, remorseless,\r\nwith deep lines upon it, the scars of many a crisis. Cold gray eyes,\r\nlooking shrewdly out from under bristling brows, surveyed us each in\r\nturn. He bowed in perfunctory fashion as Holmes mentioned my name, and\r\nthen with a masterful air of possession he drew a chair up to my\r\ncompanion and seated himself with his bony knees almost touching\r\nhim.\n\n“Let me say right here, Mr.\xa0Holmes,” he began, “that\r\nmoney is nothing to me in this case. You can burn it if it’s any use in\r\nlighting you to the truth. This woman is innocent and this woman has to\r\nbe cleared, and it’s up to you to do it. Name your figure!”\n\n“My professional charges are upon a fixed scale,” said Holmes coldly.\r\n“I do not vary them, save when I remit them altogether.”\n\n“Well, if dollars make no difference to you, think of the reputation.\r\nIf you pull this off every paper in England and America will be booming\r\nyou. You’ll be the talk of two continents.”\n\n“Thank you, Mr.\xa0Gibson, I do not think that I am in need\r\nof booming. It may surprise you to know that I prefer to work\r\nanonymously, and that it is the problem itself which attracts me. But we\r\nare wasting time. Let us get down to the facts.”\n\n“I think that you will find all the main ones in the press reports. I\r\ndon’t know that I can add anything which will help you. But if there is\r\nanything you would wish more light upon\ufeff—well, I am here to give it.”\n\n“Well, there is just one point.”\n\n“What is it?”\n\n“What were the exact relations between you and Miss Dunbar?”\n\nThe Gold King gave a violent start and half rose from his chair. Then\r\nhis massive calm came back to him.\n\n“I suppose you are within your rights\ufeff—and maybe doing your duty\ufeff—in\r\nasking such a question, Mr.\xa0Holmes.”\n\n“We will agree to suppose so,” said Holmes.\n\n“Then I can assure you that our relations were entirely and always\r\nthose of an employer towards a young lady whom he never conversed with,\r\nor ever saw, save when she was in the company of his children.”\n\nHolmes rose from his chair.\n\n“I am a rather busy man, Mr.\xa0Gibson,” said he, “and I\r\nhave no time or taste for aimless conversations. I wish you\r\ngoodmorning.”\n\nOur visitor had risen also, and his great loose figure towered above\r\nHolmes. There was an angry gleam from under those bristling brows and a\r\ntinge of colour in the sallow cheeks.\n\n“What the devil do you mean by this, Mr.\xa0Holmes? Do you\r\ndismiss my case?”\n\n“Well, Mr.\xa0Gibson, at least I dismiss you. I should have\r\nthought my words were plain.”\n\n“Plain enough, but what’s at the back of it? Raising the price on me,\r\nor afraid to tackle it, or what? I’ve a right to a plain answer.”\n\n“Well, perhaps you have,” said Holmes. “I’ll give you one. This case\r\nis quite sufficiently complicated to start with without the further\r\ndifficulty of false information.”\n\n“Meaning that I lie.”\n\n“Well, I was trying to express it as delicately as I could, but if\r\nyou insist upon the word I will not contradict you.”\n\nI sprang to my feet, for the expression upon the millionaire’s face\r\nwas fiendish in its intensity, and he had raised his great knotted fist.\r\nHolmes smiled languidly and reached his hand out for his pipe.\n\n“Don’t be noisy, Mr.\xa0Gibson. I find that after breakfast\r\neven the smallest argument is unsettling. I suggest that a stroll in the\r\nmorning air and a little quiet thought will be greatly to your\r\nadvantage.”\n\nWith an effort the Gold King mastered his fury. I could not but\r\nadmire him, for by a supreme self-command he had turned in a minute from\r\na hot flame of anger to a frigid and contemptuous indifference.\n\n“Well, it’s your choice. I guess you know how to run your own\r\nbusiness. I can’t make you touch the case against your will. You’ve done\r\nyourself no good this morning, Mr.\xa0Holmes, for I have\r\nbroken stronger men than you. No man ever crossed me and was the better\r\nfor it.”\n\n“So many have said so, and yet here I am,” said Holmes, smiling.\r\n“Well, good morning, Mr.\xa0Gibson. You have a good deal yet\r\nto learn.”\n\nOur visitor made a noisy exit, but Holmes smoked in imperturbable\r\nsilence with dreamy eyes fixed upon the ceiling.\n\n“Any views, Watson?” he asked at last.\n\n“Well, Holmes, I must confess that when I consider that this is a man\r\nwho would certainly brush any obstacle from his path, and when I\r\nremember that his wife may have been an obstacle and an object of\r\ndislike, as that man Bates plainly told us, it seems to me\ufeff—”\n\n“Exactly. And to me also.”\n\n“But what were his relations with the governess, and how did you\r\ndiscover them?”\n\n“Bluff, Watson, bluff! When I considered the passionate,\r\nunconventional, unbusinesslike tone of his letter and contrasted it with\r\nhis self-contained manner and appearance, it was pretty clear that there\r\nwas some deep emotion which centred upon the accused woman rather than\r\nupon the victim. We’ve got to understand the exact relations of those\r\nthree people if we are to reach the truth. You saw the frontal attack\r\nwhich I made upon him, and how imperturbably he received it. Then I\r\nbluffed him by giving him the impression that I was absolutely certain,\r\nwhen in reality I was only extremely suspicious.”\n\n“Perhaps he will come back?”\n\n“He is sure to come back. He must come back. He can’t leave\r\nit where it is. Ha! isn’t that a ring? Yes, there is his footstep. Well,\r\nMr.\xa0Gibson, I was just saying to Dr.\xa0Watson\r\nthat you were somewhat overdue.”\n\nThe Gold King had reentered the room in a more chastened mood than he\r\nhad left it. His wounded pride still showed in his resentful eyes, but\r\nhis common sense had shown him that he must yield if he would attain his\r\nend.\n\n“I’ve been thinking it over, Mr.\xa0Holmes, and I feel that\r\nI have been hasty in taking your remarks amiss. You are justified in\r\ngetting down to the facts, whatever they may be, and I think the more of\r\nyou for it. I can assure you, however, that the relations between Miss\r\nDunbar and me don’t really touch this case.”\n\n“That is for me to decide, is it not?”\n\n“Yes, I guess that is so. You’re like a surgeon who wants every\r\nsymptom before he can give his diagnosis.”\n\n“Exactly. That expresses it. And it is only a patient who has an\r\nobject in deceiving his surgeon who would conceal the facts of his\r\ncase.”\n\n“That may be so, but you will admit, Mr.\xa0Holmes, that\r\nmost men would shy off a bit when they are asked point-blank what their\r\nrelations with a woman may be\ufeff—if there is really some serious feeling in\r\nthe case. I guess most men have a little private reserve of their own in\r\nsome corner of their souls where they don’t welcome intruders. And you\r\nburst suddenly into it. But the object excuses you, since it was to try\r\nand save her. Well, the stakes are down and the reserve open, and you\r\ncan explore where you will. What is it you want?”\n\n“The truth.”\n\nThe Gold King paused for a moment as one who marshals his thoughts.\r\nHis grim, deep-lined face had become even sadder and more grave.\n\n“I can give it to you in a very few words, Mr.\xa0Holmes,”\r\nsaid he at last. “There are some things that are painful as well as\r\ndifficult to say, so I won’t go deeper than is needful. I met my wife\r\nwhen I was gold-hunting in Brazil. Maria Pinto was the daughter of a\r\ngovernment official at Manaos, and she was very beautiful. I was young\r\nand ardent in those days, but even now, as I look back with colder blood\r\nand a more critical eye, I can see that she was rare and wonderful in\r\nher beauty. It was a deep rich nature, too, passionate, wholehearted,\r\ntropical, ill-balanced, very different from the American women whom I\r\nhad known. Well, to make a long story short, I loved her and I married\r\nher. It was only when the romance had passed\ufeff—and it lingered for\r\nyears\ufeff—that I realized that we had nothing\ufeff—absolutely nothing\ufeff—in common.\r\nMy love faded. If hers had faded also it might have been easier. But you\r\nknow the wonderful way of women! Do what I might, nothing could turn her\r\nfrom me. If I have been harsh to her, even brutal as some have said, it\r\nhas been because I knew that if I could kill her love, or if it turned\r\nto hate, it would be easier for both of us. But nothing changed her. She\r\nadored me in those English woods as she had adored me twenty years ago\r\non the banks of the Amazon. Do what I might, she was as devoted as\r\never.\n\n“Then came Miss Grace Dunbar. She answered our advertisement and\r\nbecame governess to our two children. Perhaps you have seen her portrait\r\nin the papers. The whole world has proclaimed that she also is a very\r\nbeautiful woman. Now, I make no pretence to be more moral than my\r\nneighbours, and I will admit to you that I could not live under the same\r\nroof with such a woman and in daily contact with her without feeling a\r\npassionate regard for her. Do you blame me,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes?”\n\n“I do not blame you for feeling it. I should blame you if you\r\nexpressed it, since this young lady was in a sense under your\r\nprotection.”\n\n“Well, maybe so,” said the millionaire, though for a moment the\r\nreproof had brought the old angry gleam into his eyes. “I’m not\r\npretending to be any better than I am. I guess all my life I’ve been a\r\nman that reached out his hand for what he wanted, and I never wanted\r\nanything more than the love and possession of that woman. I told her\r\nso.”\n\n“Oh, you did, did you?”\n\nHolmes could look very formidable when he was moved.\n\n“I said to her that if I could marry her I would, but that it was out\r\nof my power. I said that money was no object and that all I could do to\r\nmake her happy and comfortable would be done.”\n\n“Very generous, I am sure,” said Holmes with a sneer.\n\n“See here, Mr.\xa0Holmes. I came to you on a question of\r\nevidence, not on a question of morals. I’m not asking for your\r\ncriticism.”\n\n“It is only for the young lady’s sake that I touch your case at all,”\r\nsaid Holmes sternly. “I don’t know that anything she is accused of is\r\nreally worse than what you have yourself admitted, that you have tried\r\nto ruin a defenceless girl who was under your roof. Some of you rich men\r\nhave to be taught that all the world cannot be bribed into condoning\r\nyour offences.”\n\nTo my surprise the Gold King took the reproof with equanimity.\n\n“That’s how I feel myself about it now. I thank God that my plans did\r\nnot work out as I intended. She would have none of it, and she wanted to\r\nleave the house instantly.”\n\n“Why did she not?”\n\n“Well, in the first place, others were dependent upon her, and it was\r\nno light matter for her to let them all down by sacrificing her living.\r\nWhen I had sworn\ufeff—as I did\ufeff—that she should never be molested again, she\r\nconsented to remain. But there was another reason. She knew the\r\ninfluence she had over me, and that it was stronger than any other\r\ninfluence in the world. She wanted to use it for good.”\n\n“How?”\n\n“Well, she knew something of my affairs. They are large,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes\ufeff—large beyond the belief of an ordinary man. I\r\ncan make or break\ufeff—and it is usually break. It wasn’t individuals only.\r\nIt was communities, cities, even nations. Business is a hard game, and\r\nthe weak go to the wall. I played the game for all it was worth. I never\r\nsquealed myself, and I never cared if the other fellow squealed. But she\r\nsaw it different. I guess she was right. She believed and said that a\r\nfortune for one man that was more than he needed should not be built on\r\nten thousand ruined men who were left without the means of life. That\r\nwas how she saw it, and I guess she could see past the dollars to\r\nsomething that was more lasting. She found that I listened to what she\r\nsaid, and she believed she was serving the world by influencing my\r\nactions. So she stayed\ufeff—and then this came along.”\n\n“Can you throw any light upon that?”\n\nThe Gold King paused for a minute or more, his head sunk in his\r\nhands, lost in deep thought.\n\n“It’s very black against her. I can’t deny that. And women lead an\r\ninward life and may do things beyond the judgment of a man. At first I\r\nwas so rattled and taken aback that I was ready to think she had been\r\nled away in some extraordinary fashion that was clean against her usual\r\nnature. One explanation came into my head. I give it to you,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes, for what it is worth. There is no doubt that my\r\nwife was bitterly jealous. There is a soul-jealousy that can be as\r\nfrantic as any body-jealousy, and though my wife had no cause\ufeff—and I\r\nthink she understood this\ufeff—for the latter, she was aware that this\r\nEnglish girl exerted an influence upon my mind and my acts that she\r\nherself never had. It was an influence for good, but that did not mend\r\nthe matter. She was crazy with hatred and the heat of the Amazon was\r\nalways in her blood. She might have planned to murder Miss Dunbar\ufeff—or we\r\nwill say to threaten her with a gun and so frighten her into leaving us.\r\nThen there might have been a scuffle and the gun gone off and shot the\r\nwoman who held it.”\n\n“That possibility had already occurred to me,” said Holmes. “Indeed,\r\nit is the only obvious alternative to deliberate murder.”\n\n“But she utterly denies it.”\n\n“Well, that is not final\ufeff—is it? One can understand that a woman\r\nplaced in so awful a position might hurry home still in her bewilderment\r\nholding the revolver. She might even throw it down among her clothes,\r\nhardly knowing what she was doing, and when it was found she might try\r\nto lie her way out by a total denial, since all explanation was\r\nimpossible. What is against such a supposition?”\n\n“Miss Dunbar herself.”\n\n“Well, perhaps.”\n\nHolmes looked at his watch. “I have no doubt we can get the necessary\r\npermits this morning and reach Winchester by the evening train. When I\r\nhave seen this young lady it is very possible that I may be of more use\r\nto you in the matter, though I cannot promise that my conclusions will\r\nnecessarily be such as you desire.”\n\nThere was some delay in the official pass, and instead of reaching\r\nWinchester that day we went down to Thor Place, the Hampshire estate of\r\nMr.\xa0Neil Gibson. He did not accompany us himself, but we\r\nhad the address of Sergeant Coventry, of the local police, who had first\r\nexamined into the affair. He was a tall, thin, cadaverous man, with a\r\nsecretive and mysterious manner which conveyed the idea that he knew or\r\nsuspected a very great deal more than he dared say. He had a trick, too,\r\nof suddenly sinking his voice to a whisper as if he had come upon\r\nsomething of vital importance, though the information was usually\r\ncommonplace enough. Behind these tricks of manner he soon showed himself\r\nto be a decent, honest fellow who was not too proud to admit that he was\r\nout of his depth and would welcome any help.\n\n“Anyhow, I’d rather have you than Scotland Yard,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes,” said he. “If the Yard gets called into a case,\r\nthen the local loses all credit for success and may be blamed for\r\nfailure. Now, you play straight, so I’ve heard.”\n\n“I need not appear in the matter at all,” said Holmes to the evident\r\nrelief of our melancholy acquaintance. “If I can clear it up I don’t ask\r\nto have my name mentioned.”\n\n“Well, it’s very handsome of you, I am sure. And your friend,\r\nDr.\xa0Watson, can be trusted, I know. Now,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes, as we walk down to the place there is one\r\nquestion I should like to ask you. I’d breathe it to no soul but you.”\r\nHe looked round as though he hardly dare utter the words. “Don’t you\r\nthink there might be a case against Mr.\xa0Neil Gibson\r\nhimself?”\n\n“I have been considering that.”\n\n“You’ve not seen Miss Dunbar. She is a wonderful fine woman in every\r\nway. He may well have wished his wife out of the road. And these\r\nAmericans are readier with pistols than our folk are. It was\r\nhis pistol, you know.”\n\n“Was that clearly made out?”\n\n“Yes, sir. It was one of a pair that he had.”\n\n“One of a pair? Where is the other?”\n\n“Well, the gentleman has a lot of firearms of one sort and another.\r\nWe never quite matched that particular pistol\ufeff—but the box was made for\r\ntwo.”\n\n“If it was one of a pair you should surely be able to match it.”\n\n“Well, we have them all laid out at the house if you would care to\r\nlook them over.”\n\n“Later, perhaps. I think we will walk down together and have a look\r\nat the scene of the tragedy.”\n\nThis conversation had taken place in the little front room of\r\nSergeant Coventry’s humble cottage which served as the local\r\npolice-station. A walk of half a mile or so across a windswept heath,\r\nall gold and bronze with the fading ferns, brought us to a side-gate\r\nopening into the grounds of the Thor Place estate. A path led us through\r\nthe pheasant preserves, and then from a clearing we saw the widespread,\r\nhalf-timbered house, half Tudor and half Georgian, upon the crest of the\r\nhill. Beside us there was a long, reedy pool, constricted in the centre\r\nwhere the main carriage drive passed over a stone bridge, but swelling\r\ninto small lakes on either side. Our guide paused at the mouth of this\r\nbridge, and he pointed to the ground.\n\n“That was where Mrs.\xa0Gibson’s body lay. I marked it by\r\nthat stone.”\n\n“I understand that you were there before it was moved?”\n\n“Yes, they sent for me at once.”\n\n“Who did?”\n\n“Mr.\xa0Gibson himself. The moment the alarm was given and\r\nhe had rushed down with others from the house, he insisted that nothing\r\nshould be moved until the police should arrive.”\n\n“That was sensible. I gathered from the newspaper report that the\r\nshot was fired from close quarters.”\n\n“Yes, sir, very close.”\n\n“Near the right temple?”\n\n“Just behind it, sir.”\n\n“How did the body lie?”\n\n“On the back, sir. No trace of a struggle. No marks. No weapon. The\r\nshort note from Miss Dunbar was clutched in her left hand.”\n\n“Clutched, you say?”\n\n“Yes, sir, we could hardly open the fingers.”\n\n“That is of great importance. It excludes the idea that anyone could\r\nhave placed the note there after death in order to furnish a false clue.\r\nDear me! The note, as I remember, was quite short:\n\nI will be at Thor Bridge at nine o’clock.\n\nG. Dunbar\n\n“Was that not so?”\n\n“Yes, sir.”\n\n“Did Miss Dunbar admit writing it?”\n\n“Yes, sir.”\n\n“What was her explanation?”\n\n“Her defence was reserved for the Assizes. She would say\r\nnothing.”\n\n“The problem is certainly a very interesting one. The point of the\r\nletter is very obscure, is it not?”\n\n“Well, sir,” said the guide, “it seemed, if I may be so bold as to\r\nsay so, the only really clear point in the whole case.”\n\nHolmes shook his head.\n\n“Granting that the letter is genuine and was really written, it was\r\ncertainly received some time before\ufeff—say one hour or two. Why, then, was\r\nthis lady still clasping it in her left hand? Why should she carry it so\r\ncarefully? She did not need to refer to it in the interview. Does it not\r\nseem remarkable?”\n\n“Well, sir, as you put it, perhaps it does.”\n\n“I think I should like to sit quietly for a few minutes and think it\r\nout.” He seated himself upon the stone ledge of the bridge, and I could\r\nsee his quick gray eyes darting their questioning glances in every\r\ndirection. Suddenly he sprang up again and ran across to the opposite\r\nparapet, whipped his lens from his pocket, and began to examine the\r\nstonework.\n\n“This is curious,” said he.\n\n“Yes, sir, we saw the chip on the ledge. I expect it’s been done by\r\nsome passerby.”\n\nThe stonework was gray, but at this one point it showed white for a\r\nspace not larger than a sixpence. When examined closely one could see\r\nthat the surface was chipped as by a sharp blow.\n\n“It took some violence to do that,” said Holmes thoughtfully. With\r\nhis cane he struck the ledge several times without leaving a mark. “Yes,\r\nit was a hard knock. In a curious place, too. It was not from above but\r\nfrom below, for you see that it is on the lower edge of the\r\nparapet.”\n\n“But it is at least fifteen feet from the body.”\n\n“Yes, it is fifteen feet from the body. It may have nothing to do\r\nwith the matter, but it is a point worth noting. I do not think that we\r\nhave anything more to learn here. There were no footsteps, you say?”\n\n“The ground was iron hard, sir. There were no traces at all.”\n\n“Then we can go. We will go up to the house first and look over these\r\nweapons of which you speak. Then we shall get on to Winchester, for I\r\nshould desire to see Miss Dunbar before we go farther.”\n\nMr.\xa0Neil Gibson had not returned from town, but we saw\r\nin the house the neurotic Mr.\xa0Bates who had called upon us\r\nin the morning. He showed us with a sinister relish the formidable array\r\nof firearms of various shapes and sizes which his employer had\r\naccumulated in the course of an adventurous life.\n\n“Mr.\xa0Gibson has his enemies, as anyone would expect who\r\nknew him and his methods,” said he. “He sleeps with a loaded revolver in\r\nthe drawer beside his bed. He is a man of violence, sir, and there are\r\ntimes when all of us are afraid of him. I am sure that the poor lady who\r\nhas passed was often terrified.”\n\n“Did you ever witness physical violence towards her?”\n\n“No, I cannot say that. But I have heard words which were nearly as\r\nbad\ufeff—words of cold, cutting contempt, even before the servants.”\n\n“Our millionaire does not seem to shine in private life,” remarked\r\nHolmes as we made our way to the station. “Well, Watson, we have come on\r\na good many facts, some of them new ones, and yet I seem some way from\r\nmy conclusion. In spite of the very evident dislike which\r\nMr.\xa0Bates has to his employer, I gather from him that when\r\nthe alarm came he was undoubtedly in his library. Dinner was over at\r\n8:30 and all was normal up to then. It is true that the alarm was\r\nsomewhat late in the evening, but the tragedy certainly occurred about\r\nthe hour named in the note. There is no evidence at all that\r\nMr.\xa0Gibson had been out of doors since his return from town\r\nat five o’clock. On the other hand, Miss Dunbar, as I understand it,\r\nadmits that she had made an appointment to meet Mrs.\xa0Gibson\r\nat the bridge. Beyond this she would say nothing, as her lawyer had\r\nadvised her to reserve her defence. We have several very vital questions\r\nto ask that young lady, and my mind will not be easy until we have seen\r\nher. I must confess that the case would seem to me to be very black\r\nagainst her if it were not for one thing.”\n\n“And what is that, Holmes?”\n\n“The finding of the pistol in her wardrobe.”\n\n“Dear me, Holmes!” I cried, “that seemed to me to be the most damning\r\nincident of all.”\n\n“Not so, Watson. It had struck me even at my first perfunctory\r\nreading as very strange, and now that I am in closer touch with the case\r\nit is my only firm ground for hope. We must look for consistency. Where\r\nthere is a want of it we must suspect deception.”\n\n“I hardly follow you.”\n\n“Well now, Watson, suppose for a moment that we visualize you in the\r\ncharacter of a woman who, in a cold, premeditated fashion, is about to\r\nget rid of a rival. You have planned it. A note has been written. The\r\nvictim has come. You have your weapon. The crime is done. It has been\r\nworkmanlike and complete. Do you tell me that after carrying out so\r\ncrafty a crime you would now ruin your reputation as a criminal by\r\nforgetting to fling your weapon into those adjacent reed-beds which\r\nwould forever cover it, but you must needs carry it carefully home and\r\nput it in your own wardrobe, the very first place that would be\r\nsearched? Your best friends would hardly call you a schemer, Watson, and\r\nyet I could not picture you doing anything so crude as that.”\n\n“In the excitement of the moment\ufeff—”\n\n“No, no, Watson, I will not admit that it is possible. Where a crime\r\nis coolly premeditated, then the means of covering it are coolly\r\npremeditated also. I hope, therefore, that we are in the presence of a\r\nserious misconception.”\n\n“But there is so much to explain.”\n\n“Well, we shall set about explaining it. When once your point of view\r\nis changed, the very thing which was so damning becomes a clue to the\r\ntruth. For example, there is this revolver. Miss Dunbar disclaims all\r\nknowledge of it. On our new theory she is speaking truth when she says\r\nso. Therefore, it was placed in her wardrobe. Who placed it there?\r\nSomeone who wished to incriminate her. Was not that person the actual\r\ncriminal? You see how we come at once upon a most fruitful line of\r\ninquiry.”\n\nWe were compelled to spend the night at Winchester, as the\r\nformalities had not yet been completed, but next morning, in the company\r\nof Mr.\xa0Joyce Cummings, the rising barrister who was\r\nentrusted with the defence, we were allowed to see the young lady in her\r\ncell. I had expected from all that we had heard to see a beautiful\r\nwoman, but I can never forget the effect which Miss Dunbar produced upon\r\nme. It was no wonder that even the masterful millionaire had found in\r\nher something more powerful than himself\ufeff—something which could control\r\nand guide him. One felt, too, as one looked at the strong, clear-cut,\r\nand yet sensitive face, that even should she be capable of some\r\nimpetuous deed, none the less there was an innate nobility of character\r\nwhich would make her influence always for the good. She was a brunette,\r\ntall, with a noble figure and commanding presence, but her dark eyes had\r\nin them the appealing, helpless expression of the hunted creature who\r\nfeels the nets around it, but can see no way out from the toils. Now, as\r\nshe realized the presence and the help of my famous friend, there came a\r\ntouch of colour in her wan cheeks and a light of hope began to glimmer\r\nin the glance which she turned upon us.\n\n“Perhaps Mr.\xa0Neil Gibson has told you something of what\r\noccurred between us?” she asked in a low, agitated voice.\n\n“Yes,” Holmes answered, “you need not pain yourself by entering into\r\nthat part of the story. After seeing you, I am prepared to accept\r\nMr.\xa0Gibson’s statement both as to the influence which you\r\nhad over him and as to the innocence of your relations with him. But why\r\nwas the whole situation not brought out in court?”\n\n“It seemed to me incredible that such a charge could be sustained. I\r\nthought that if we waited the whole thing must clear itself up without\r\nour being compelled to enter into painful details of the inner life of\r\nthe family. But I understand that far from clearing it has become even\r\nmore serious.”\n\n“My dear young lady,” cried Holmes earnestly, “I beg you to have no\r\nillusions upon the point. Mr.\xa0Cummings here would assure\r\nyou that all the cards are at present against us, and that we must do\r\neverything that is possible if we are to win clear. It would be a cruel\r\ndeception to pretend that you are not in very great danger. Give me all\r\nthe help you can, then, to get at the truth.”\n\n“I will conceal nothing.”\n\n“Tell us, then, of your true relations with Mr.\xa0Gibson’s\r\nwife.”\n\n“She hated me, Mr.\xa0Holmes. She hated me with all the\r\nfervour of her tropical nature. She was a woman who would do nothing by\r\nhalves, and the measure of her love for her husband was the measure also\r\nof her hatred for me. It is probable that she misunderstood our\r\nrelations. I would not wish to wrong her, but she loved so vividly in a\r\nphysical sense that she could hardly understand the mental, and even\r\nspiritual, tie which held her husband to me, or imagine that it was only\r\nmy desire to influence his power to good ends which kept me under his\r\nroof. I can see now that I was wrong. Nothing could justify me in\r\nremaining where I was a cause of unhappiness, and yet it is certain that\r\nthe unhappiness would have remained even if I had left the house.”\n\n“Now, Miss Dunbar,” said Holmes, “I beg you to tell us exactly what\r\noccurred that evening.”\n\n“I can tell you the truth so far as I know it,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes, but I am in a position to prove nothing, and\r\nthere are points\ufeff—the most vital points\ufeff—which I can neither explain nor\r\ncan I imagine any explanation.”\n\n“If you will find the facts, perhaps others may find the\r\nexplanation.”\n\n“With regard, then, to my presence at Thor Bridge that night, I\r\nreceived a note from Mrs.\xa0Gibson in the morning. It lay on\r\nthe table of the schoolroom, and it may have been left there by her own\r\nhand. It implored me to see her there after dinner, said she had\r\nsomething important to say to me, and asked me to leave an answer on the\r\nsundial in the garden, as she desired no one to be in our confidence. I\r\nsaw no reason for such secrecy, but I did as she asked, accepting the\r\nappointment. She asked me to destroy her note and I burned it in the\r\nschoolroom grate. She was very much afraid of her husband, who treated\r\nher with a harshness for which I frequently reproached him, and I could\r\nonly imagine that she acted in this way because she did not wish him to\r\nknow of our interview.”\n\n“Yet she kept your reply very carefully?”\n\n“Yes. I was surprised to hear that she had it in her hand when she\r\ndied.”\n\n“Well, what happened then?”\n\n“I went down as I had promised. When I reached the bridge she was\r\nwaiting for me. Never did I realize till that moment how this poor\r\ncreature hated me. She was like a mad woman\ufeff—indeed, I think she was a\r\nmad woman, subtly mad with the deep power of deception which insane\r\npeople may have. How else could she have met me with unconcern every day\r\nand yet had so raging a hatred of me in her heart? I will not say what\r\nshe said. She poured her whole wild fury out in burning and horrible\r\nwords. I did not even answer\ufeff—I could not. It was dreadful to see her. I\r\nput my hands to my ears and rushed away. When I left her she was\r\nstanding, still shrieking out her curses at me, in the mouth of the\r\nbridge.”\n\n“Where she was afterwards found?”\n\n“Within a few yards from the spot.”\n\n“And yet, presuming that she met her death shortly after you left\r\nher, you heard no shot?”\n\n“No, I heard nothing. But, indeed, Mr.\xa0Holmes, I was so\r\nagitated and horrified by this terrible outbreak that I rushed to get\r\nback to the peace of my own room, and I was incapable of noticing\r\nanything which happened.”\n\n“You say that you returned to your room. Did you leave it again\r\nbefore next morning?”\n\n“Yes, when the alarm came that the poor creature had met her death I\r\nran out with the others.”\n\n“Did you see Mr.\xa0Gibson?”\n\n“Yes, he had just returned from the bridge when I saw him. He had\r\nsent for the doctor and the police.”\n\n“Did he seem to you much perturbed?”\n\n“Mr.\xa0Gibson is a very strong, self-contained man. I do\r\nnot think that he would ever show his emotions on the surface. But I,\r\nwho knew him so well, could see that he was deeply concerned.”\n\n“Then we come to the all-important point. This pistol that was found\r\nin your room. Had you ever seen it before?”\n\n“Never, I swear it.”\n\n“When was it found?”\n\n“Next morning, when the police made their search.”\n\n“Among your clothes?”\n\n“Yes, on the floor of my wardrobe under my dresses.”\n\n“You could not guess how long it had been there?”\n\n“It had not been there the morning before.”\n\n“How do you know?”\n\n“Because I tidied out the wardrobe.”\n\n“That is final. Then someone came into your room and placed the\r\npistol there in order to inculpate you.”\n\n“It must have been so.”\n\n“And when?”\n\n“It could only have been at mealtime, or else at the hours when I\r\nwould be in the schoolroom with the children.”\n\n“As you were when you got the note?”\n\n“Yes, from that time onward for the whole morning.”\n\n“Thank you, Miss Dunbar. Is there any other point which could help me\r\nin the investigation?”\n\n“I can think of none.”\n\n“There was some sign of violence on the stonework of the bridge\ufeff—a\r\nperfectly fresh chip just opposite the body. Could you suggest any\r\npossible explanation of that?”\n\n“Surely it must be a mere coincidence.”\n\n“Curious, Miss Dunbar, very curious. Why should it appear at the very\r\ntime of the tragedy, and why at the very place?”\n\n“But what could have caused it? Only great violence could have such\r\nan effect.”\n\nHolmes did not answer. His pale, eager face had suddenly assumed that\r\ntense, faraway expression which I had learned to associate with the\r\nsupreme manifestations of his genius. So evident was the crisis in his\r\nmind that none of us dared to speak, and we sat, barrister, prisoner,\r\nand myself, watching him in a concentrated and absorbed silence.\r\nSuddenly he sprang from his chair, vibrating with nervous energy and the\r\npressing need for action.\n\n“Come, Watson, come!” he cried.\n\n“What is it, Mr.\xa0Holmes?”\n\n“Never mind, my dear lady. You will hear from me,\r\nMr.\xa0Cummings. With the help of the god of justice I will\r\ngive you a case which will make England ring. You will get news by\r\ntomorrow, Miss Dunbar, and meanwhile take my assurance that the clouds\r\nare lifting and that I have every hope that the light of truth is\r\nbreaking through.”\n\nIt was not a long journey from Winchester to Thor Place, but it was\r\nlong to me in my impatience, while for Holmes it was evident that it\r\nseemed endless; for, in his nervous restlessness he could not sit still,\r\nbut paced the carriage or drummed with his long, sensitive fingers upon\r\nthe cushions beside him. Suddenly, however, as we neared our destination\r\nhe seated himself opposite to me\ufeff—we had a first-class carriage to\r\nourselves\ufeff—and laying a hand upon each of my knees he looked into my eyes\r\nwith the peculiarly mischievous gaze which was charactenstic of his more\r\nimp-like moods.\n\n“Watson,” said he, “I have some recollection that you go armed upon\r\nthese excursions of ours.”\n\nIt was as well for him that I did so, for he took little care for his\r\nown safety when his mind was once absorbed by a problem so that more\r\nthan once my revolver had been a good friend in need. I reminded him of\r\nthe fact.\n\n“Yes, yes, I am a little absentminded in such matters. But have you\r\nyour revolver on you?”\n\nI produced it from my hip-pocket, a short, handy, but very\r\nserviceable little weapon. He undid the catch, shook out the cartridges,\r\nand examined it with care.\n\n“It’s heavy\ufeff—remarkably heavy,” said he.\n\n“Yes, it is a solid bit of work.”\n\nHe mused over it for a minute.\n\n“Do you know, Watson,” said he, “I believe your revolver is going to\r\nhave a very intimate connection with the mystery which we are\r\ninvestigating.”\n\n“My dear Holmes, you are joking.”\n\n“No, Watson, I am very serious. There is a test before us. If the\r\ntest comes off, all will be clear. And the test will depend upon the\r\nconduct of this little weapon. One cartridge out. Now we will replace\r\nthe other five and put on the safety-catch. So! That increases the\r\nweight and makes it a better reproduction.”\n\nI had no glimmer of what was in his mind, nor did he enlighten me,\r\nbut sat lost in thought until we pulled up in the little Hampshire\r\nstation. We secured a ramshackle trap, and in a quarter of an hour were\r\nat the house of our confidential friend, the sergeant.\n\n“A clue, Mr.\xa0Holmes? What is it?”\n\n“It all depends upon the behaviour of Dr.\xa0Watson’s\r\nrevolver,” said my friend. “Here it is. Now, officer, can you give me\r\nten yards of string?”\n\nThe village shop provided a ball of stout twine.\n\n“I think that this is all we will need,” said Holmes. “Now, if you\r\nplease, we will get off on what I hope is the last stage of our\r\njourney.”\n\nThe sun was setting and turning the rolling Hampshire moor into a\r\nwonderful autumnal panorama. The sergeant, with many critical and\r\nincredulous glances, which showed his deep doubts of the sanity of my\r\ncompanion, lurched along beside us. As we approached the scene of the\r\ncrime I could see that my friend under all his habitual coolness was in\r\ntruth deeply agitated.\n\n“Yes,” he said in answer to my remark, “you have seen me miss my mark\r\nbefore, Watson. I have an instinct for such things, and yet it has\r\nsometimes played me false. It seemed a certainty when first it flashed\r\nacross my mind in the cell at Winchester, but one drawback of an active\r\nmind is that one can always conceive alternative explanations which\r\nwould make our scent a false one. And yet\ufeff—and yet\ufeff—Well, Watson, we can\r\nbut try.”\n\nAs he walked he had firmly tied one end of the string to the handle\r\nof the revolver. We had now reached the scene of the tragedy. With great\r\ncare he marked out under the guidance of the policeman the exact spot\r\nwhere the body had been stretched. He then hunted among the heather and\r\nthe ferns until he found a considerable stone. This he secured to the\r\nother end of his line of string, and he hung it over the parapet of the\r\nbridge so that it swung clear above the water. He then stood on the\r\nfatal spot, some distance from the edge of the bridge, with my revolver\r\nin his hand, the string being taut between the weapon and the heavy\r\nstone on the farther side.\n\n“Now for it!” he cried.\n\nAt the words he raised the pistol to his head, and then let go his\r\ngrip. In an instant it had been whisked away by the weight of the stone,\r\nhad struck with a sharp crack against the parapet, and had vanished over\r\nthe side into the water. It had hardly gone before Holmes was kneeling\r\nbeside the stonework, and a joyous cry showed that he had found what he\r\nexpected.\n\n“Was there ever a more exact demonstration?” he cried. “See, Watson,\r\nyour revolver has solved the problem!” As he spoke he pointed to a\r\nsecond chip of the exact size and shape of the first which had appeared\r\non the under edge of the stone balustrade.\n\n“We’ll stay at the inn tonight,” he continued as he rose and faced\r\nthe astonished sergeant. “You will, of course, get a grappling-hook and\r\nyou will easily restore my friend’s revolver. You will also find beside\r\nit the revolver, string and weight with which this vindictive woman\r\nattempted to disguise her own crime and to fasten a charge of murder\r\nupon an innocent victim. You can let Mr.\xa0Gibson know that I\r\nwill see him in the morning, when steps can be taken for Miss Dunbar’s\r\nvindication.”\n\nLate that evening, as we sat together smoking our pipes in the\r\nvillage inn, Holmes gave me a brief review of what had passed.\n\n“I fear, Watson,” said he, “that you will not improve any reputation\r\nwhich I may have acquired by adding the case of the Thor Bridge mystery\r\nto your annals. I have been sluggish in mind and wanting in that mixture\r\nof imagination and reality which is the basis of my art. I confess that\r\nthe chip in the stonework was a sufficient clue to suggest the true\r\nsolution, and that I blame myself for not having attained it sooner.\n\n“It must be admitted that the workings of this unhappy woman’s mind\r\nwere deep and subtle, so that it was no very simple matter to unravel\r\nher plot. I do not think that in our adventures we have ever come across\r\na stranger example of what perverted love can bring about. Whether Miss\r\nDunbar was her rival in a physical or in a merely mental sense seems to\r\nhave been equally unforgivable in her eyes. No doubt she blamed this\r\ninnocent lady for all those harsh dealings and unkind words with which\r\nher husband tried to repel her too demonstrative affection. Her first\r\nresolution was to end her own life. Her second was to do it in such a\r\nway as to involve her victim in a fate which was worse far than any\r\nsudden death could be.\n\n“We can follow the various steps quite clearly, and they show a\r\nremarkable subtlety of mind. A note was extracted very cleverly from\r\nMiss Dunbar which would make it appear that she had chosen the scene of\r\nthe crime. In her anxiety that it should be discovered she somewhat\r\noverdid it by holding it in her hand to the last. This alone should have\r\nexcited my suspicions earlier than it did.\n\n“Then she took one of her husband’s revolvers\ufeff—there was, as you saw,\r\nan arsenal in the house\ufeff—and kept it for her own use. A similar one she\r\nconcealed that morning in Miss Dunbar’s wardrobe after discharging one\r\nbarrel, which she could easily do in the woods without attracting\r\nattention. She then went down to the bridge where she had contrived this\r\nexceedingly ingenious method for getting rid of her weapon. When Miss\r\nDunbar appeared she used her last breath in pouring out her hatred, and\r\nthen, when she was out of hearing, carried out her terrible purpose.\r\nEvery link is now in its place and the chain is complete. The papers may\r\nask why the mere was not dragged in the first instance, but it is easy\r\nto be wise after the event, and in any case the expanse of a reed-filled\r\nlake is no easy matter to drag unless you have a clear perception of\r\nwhat you are looking for and where. Well, Watson, we have helped a\r\nremarkable woman, and also a formidable man. Should they in the future\r\njoin their forces, as seems not unlikely, the financial world may find\r\nthat Mr.\xa0Neil Gibson has learned something in that\r\nschoolroom of sorrow where our earthly lessons are taught.”\n\nThe Adventure of the Creeping Man\n\nMr.\xa0Sherlock Holmes was always of opinion that I should\r\npublish the singular facts connected with Professor Presbury, if only to\r\ndispel once for all the ugly rumours which some twenty years ago\r\nagitated the university and were echoed in the learned societies of\r\nLondon. There were, however, certain obstacles in the way, and the true\r\nhistory of this curious case remained entombed in the tin box which\r\ncontains so many records of my friend’s adventures. Now we have at last\r\nobtained permission to ventilate the facts which formed one of the very\r\nlast cases handled by Holmes before his retirement from practice. Even\r\nnow a certain reticence and discretion have to be observed in laying the\r\nmatter before the public.\n\nIt was one Sunday evening early in September of the year 1903 that I\r\nreceived one of Holmes’s laconic messages:\n\nCome at once if convenient\ufeff—if inconvenient come all the same.\n\nS. H.\n\nThe relations between us in those latter days were peculiar. He was a\r\nman of habits, narrow and concentrated habits, and I had become one of\r\nthem. As an institution I was like the violin, the shag tobacco, the old\r\nblack pipe, the index books, and others perhaps less excusable. When it\r\nwas a case of active work and a comrade was needed upon whose nerve he\r\ncould place some reliance, my role was obvious. But apart from this I\r\nhad uses. I was a whetstone for his mind. I stimulated him. He liked to\r\nthink aloud in my presence. His remarks could hardly be said to be made\r\nto me\ufeff—many of them would have been as appropriately addressed to his\r\nbedstead\ufeff—but none the less, having formed the habit, it had become in\r\nsome way helpful that I should register and interject. If I irritated\r\nhim by a certain methodical slowness in my mentality, that irritation\r\nserved only to make his own flame-like intuitions and impressions flash\r\nup the more vividly and swiftly. Such was my humble role in our\r\nalliance.\n\nWhen I arrived at Baker Street I found him huddled up in his armchair\r\nwith updrawn knees, his pipe in his mouth and his brow furrowed with\r\nthought. It was clear that he was in the throes of some vexatious\r\nproblem. With a wave of his hand he indicated my old armchair, but\r\notherwise for half an hour he gave no sign that he was aware of my\r\npresence. Then with a start he seemed to come from his reverie, and with\r\nhis usual whimsical smile he greeted me back to what had once been my\r\nhome.\n\n“You will excuse a certain abstraction of mind, my dear Watson,” said\r\nhe. “Some curious facts have been submitted to me within the last\r\ntwenty-four hours, and they in turn have given rise to some speculations\r\nof a more general character. I have serious thoughts of writing a small\r\nmonograph upon the uses of dogs in the work of the detective.”\n\n“But surely, Holmes, this has been explored,” said I.\r\n“Bloodhounds\ufeff—sleuthhounds\ufeff—”\n\n“No, no, Watson, that side of the matter is, of course, obvious. But\r\nthere is another which is far more subtle. You may recollect that in the\r\ncase which you, in your sensational way, coupled with the Copper\r\nBeeches, I was able, by watching the mind of the child, to form a\r\ndeduction as to the criminal habits of the very smug and respectable\r\nfather.”\n\n“Yes, I remember it well.”\n\n“My line of thoughts about dogs is analogous. A dog reflects the\r\nfamily life. Whoever saw a frisky dog in a gloomy family, or a sad dog\r\nin a happy one? Snarling people have snarling dogs, dangerous people\r\nhave dangerous ones. And their passing moods may reflect the passing\r\nmoods of others.”\n\nI shook my head. “Surely, Holmes, this is a little farfetched,” said\r\nI.\n\nHe had refilled his pipe and resumed his seat, taking no notice of my\r\ncomment.\n\n“The practical application of what I have said is very close to the\r\nproblem which I am investigating. It is a tangled skein, you understand,\r\nand I am looking for a loose end. One possible loose end lies in the\r\nquestion: Why does Professor Presbury’s wolfhound, Roy, endeavour to\r\nbite him?”\n\nI sank back in my chair in some disappointment. Was it for so trivial\r\na question as this that I had been summoned from my work? Holmes glanced\r\nacross at me.\n\n“The same old Watson!” said he. “You never learn that the gravest\r\nissues may depend upon the smallest things. But is it not on the face of\r\nit strange that a staid, elderly philosopher\ufeff—you’ve heard of Presbury,\r\nof course, the famous Camford physiologist?\ufeff—that such a man, whose\r\nfriend has been his devoted wolfhound, should now have been twice\r\nattacked by his own dog? What do you make of it?”\n\n“The dog is ill.”\n\n“Well, that has to be considered. But he attacks no one else, nor\r\ndoes he apparently molest his master, save on very special occasions.\r\nCurious, Watson\ufeff—very curious. But young Mr.\xa0Bennett is\r\nbefore his time if that is his ring. I had hoped to have a longer chat\r\nwith you before he came.”\n\nThere was a quick step on the stairs, a sharp tap at the door and a\r\nmoment later the new client presented himself. He was a tall, handsome\r\nyouth about thirty, well dressed and elegant, but with something in his\r\nbearing which suggested the shyness of the student rather than the\r\nself-possession of the man of the world. He shook hands with Holmes, and\r\nthen looked with some surprise at me.\n\n“This matter is very delicate, Mr.\xa0Holmes,” he said.\r\n“Consider the relation in which I stand to Professor Presbury both\r\nprivately and publicly. I really can hardly justify myself if I speak\r\nbefore any third person.”\n\n“Have no fear, Mr.\xa0Bennett. Dr.\xa0Watson is\r\nthe very soul of discretion, and I can assure you that this is a matter\r\nin which I am very likely to need an assistant.”\n\n“As you like, Mr.\xa0Holmes. You will, I am sure,\r\nunderstand my having some reserves in the matter.”\n\n“You will appreciate it, Watson, when I tell you that this gentleman,\r\nMr.\xa0Trevor Bennett, is professional assistant to the great\r\nscientist, lives under his roof, and is engaged to his only daughter.\r\nCertainly we must agree that the professor has every claim upon his\r\nloyalty and devotion. But it may best be shown by taking the necessary\r\nsteps to clear up this strange mystery.”\n\n“I hope so, Mr.\xa0Holmes. That is my one object. Does\r\nDr.\xa0Watson know the situation?”\n\n“I have not had time to explain it.”\n\n“Then perhaps I had better go over the ground again before explaining\r\nsome fresh developments.”\n\n“I will do so myself,” said Holmes, “in order to show that I have the\r\nevents in their due order. The professor, Watson, is a man of European\r\nreputation. His life has been academic. There has never been a breath of\r\nscandal. He is a widower with one daughter, Edith. He is, I gather, a\r\nman of very virile and positive, one might almost say combative,\r\ncharacter. So the matter stood until a very few months ago.\n\n“Then the current of his life was broken. He is sixty-one years of\r\nage, but he became engaged to the daughter of Professor Morphy, his\r\ncolleague in the chair of comparative anatomy. It was not, as I\r\nunderstand, the reasoned courting of an elderly man but rather the\r\npassionate frenzy of youth, for no one could have shown himself a more\r\ndevoted lover. The lady, Alice Morphy, was a very perfect girl both in\r\nmind and body, so that there was every excuse for the professor’s\r\ninfatuation. None the less, it did not meet with full approval in his\r\nown family.”\n\n“We thought it rather excessive,” said our visitor.\n\n“Exactly. Excessive and a little violent and unnatural. Professor\r\nPresbury was rich, however, and there was no objection upon the part of\r\nthe father. The daughter, however, had other views, and there were\r\nalready several candidates for her hand, who, if they were less eligible\r\nfrom a worldly point of view, were at least more of an age. The girl\r\nseemed to like the professor in spite of his eccentricities. It was only\r\nage which stood in the way.\n\n“About this time a little mystery suddenly clouded the normal routine\r\nof the professor’s life. He did what he had never done before. He left\r\nhome and gave no indication where he was going. He was away a fortnight\r\nand returned looking rather travel-worn. He made no allusion to where he\r\nhad been, although he was usually the frankest of men. It chanced,\r\nhowever, that our client here, Mr.\xa0Bennett, received a\r\nletter from a fellow-student in Prague, who said that he was glad to\r\nhave seen Professor Presbury there, although he had not been able to\r\ntalk to him. Only in this way did his own household learn where he had\r\nbeen.\n\n“Now comes the point. From that time onward a curious change came\r\nover the professor. He became furtive and sly. Those around him had\r\nalways the feeling that he was not the man that they had known, but that\r\nhe was under some shadow which had darkened his higher qualities. His\r\nintellect was not affected. His lectures were as brilliant as ever. But\r\nalways there was something new, something sinister and unexpected. His\r\ndaughter, who was devoted to him, tried again and again to resume the\r\nold relations and to penetrate this mask which her father seemed to have\r\nput on. You, sir, as I understand, did the same\ufeff—but all was in vain. And\r\nnow, Mr.\xa0Bennett, tell in your own words the incident of\r\nthe letters.”\n\n“You must understand, Dr.\xa0Watson, that the professor had\r\nno secrets from me. If I were his son or his younger brother I could not\r\nhave more completely enjoyed his confidence. As his secretary I handled\r\nevery paper which came to him, and I opened and subdivided his letters.\r\nShortly after his return all this was changed. He told me that certain\r\nletters might come to him from London which would be marked by a cross\r\nunder the stamp. These were to be set aside for his own eyes only. I may\r\nsay that several of these did pass through my hands, that they had the\r\nE. C. mark, and were in an illiterate handwriting. If he\r\nanswered them at all the answers did not pass through my hands nor into\r\nthe letter-basket in which our correspondence was collected.”\n\n“And the box,” said Holmes.\n\n“Ah, yes, the box. The professor brought back a little wooden box\r\nfrom his travels. It was the one thing which suggested a Continental\r\ntour, for it was one of those quaint carved things which one associates\r\nwith Germany. This he placed in his instrument cupboard. One day, in\r\nlooking for a canula, I took up the box. To my surprise he was very\r\nangry, and reproved me in words which were quite savage for my\r\ncuriosity. It was the first time such a thing had happened, and I was\r\ndeeply hurt. I endeavoured to explain that it was a mere accident that I\r\nhad touched the box, but all the evening I was conscious that he looked\r\nat me harshly and that the incident was rankling in his mind.”\r\nMr.\xa0Bennett drew a little diary book from his pocket. “That\r\nwas on July 2nd,” said he.\n\n“You are certainly an admirable witness,” said Holmes. “I may need\r\nsome of these dates which you have noted.”\n\n“I learned method among other things from my great teacher. From the\r\ntime that I observed abnormality in his behaviour I felt that it was my\r\nduty to study his case. Thus I have it here that it was on that very\r\nday, July 2nd, that Roy attacked the professor as he came from his study\r\ninto the hall. Again, on July 11th, there was a scene of the same sort,\r\nand then I have a note of yet another upon July 20th. After that we had\r\nto banish Roy to the stables. He was a dear, affectionate animal\ufeff—but I\r\nfear I weary you.”\n\nMr.\xa0Bennett spoke in a tone of reproach, for it was very\r\nclear that Holmes was not listening. His face was rigid and his eyes\r\ngazed abstractedly at the ceiling. With an effort he recovered\r\nhimself.\n\n“Singular! Most singular!” he murmured. “These details were new to\r\nme, Mr.\xa0Bennett. I think we have now fairly gone over the\r\nold ground, have we not? But you spoke of some fresh developments.”\n\nThe pleasant, open face of our visitor clouded over, shadowed by some\r\ngrim remembrance. “What I speak of occurred the night before last,” said\r\nhe. “I was lying awake about two in the morning, when I was aware of a\r\ndull muffled sound coming from the passage. I opened my door and peeped\r\nout. I should explain that the professor sleeps at the end of the\r\npassage\ufeff—”\n\n“The date being\ufeff—?” asked Holmes.\n\nOur visitor was clearly annoyed at so irrelevant an interruption.\n\n“I have said, sir, that it was the night before last\ufeff—that is,\r\nSeptember 4th.”\n\nHolmes nodded and smiled.\n\n“Pray continue,” said he.\n\n“He sleeps at the end of the passage and would have to pass my door\r\nin order to reach the staircase. It was a really terrifying experience,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes. I think that I am as strong-nerved as my\r\nneighbours, but I was shaken by what I saw. The passage was dark save\r\nthat one window halfway along it threw a patch of light. I could see\r\nthat something was coming along the passage, something dark and\r\ncrouching. Then suddenly it emerged into the light, and I saw that it\r\nwas he. He was crawling, Mr.\xa0Holmes\ufeff—crawling! He was not\r\nquite on his hands and knees. I should rather say on his hands and feet,\r\nwith his face sunk between his hands. Yet he seemed to move with ease. I\r\nwas so paralyzed by the sight that it was not until he had reached my\r\ndoor that I was able to step forward and ask if I could assist him. His\r\nanswer was extraordinary. He sprang up, spat out some atrocious word at\r\nme, and hurried on past me, and down the staircase. I waited about for\r\nan hour, but he did not come back. It must have been daylight before he\r\nregained his room.”\n\n“Well, Watson, what make you of that?” asked Holmes with the air of\r\nthe pathologist who presents a rare specimen.\n\n“Lumbago, possibly. I have known a severe attack make a man walk in\r\njust such a way, and nothing would be more trying to the temper.”\n\n“Good, Watson! You always keep us flat-footed on the ground. But we\r\ncan hardly accept lumbago, since he was able to stand erect in a\r\nmoment.”\n\n“He was never better in health,” said Bennett. “In fact, he is\r\nstronger than I have known him for years. But there are the facts,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes. It is not a case in which we can consult the\r\npolice, and yet we are utterly at our wit’s end as to what to do, and we\r\nfeel in some strange way that we are drifting towards disaster.\r\nEdith\ufeff—Miss Presbury\ufeff—feels as I do, that we cannot wait passively any\r\nlonger.”\n\n“It is certainly a very curious and suggestive case. What do you\r\nthink, Watson?”\n\n“Speaking as a medical man,” said I, “it appears to be a case for an\r\nalienist. The old gentleman’s cerebral processes were disturbed by the\r\nlove affair. He made a journey abroad in the hope of breaking himself of\r\nthe passion. His letters and the box may be connected with some other\r\nprivate transaction\ufeff—a loan, perhaps, or share certificates, which are in\r\nthe box.”\n\n“And the wolfhound no doubt disapproved of the financial bargain. No,\r\nno, Watson, there is more in it than this. Now, I can only suggest\ufeff—”\n\nWhat Sherlock Holmes was about to suggest will never be known, for at\r\nthis moment the door opened and a young lady was shown into the room. As\r\nshe appeared Mr.\xa0Bennett sprang up with a cry and ran\r\nforward with his hands out to meet those which she had herself\r\noutstretched.\n\n“Edith, dear! Nothing the matter, I hope?”\n\n“I felt I must follow you. Oh, Jack, I have been so dreadfully\r\nfrightened! It is awful to be there alone.”\n\n“Mr.\xa0Holmes, this is the young lady I spoke of. This is\r\nmy fiancée.”\n\n“We were gradually coming to that conclusion, were we not, Watson?”\r\nHolmes answered with a smile. “I take it, Miss Presbury, that there is\r\nsome fresh development in the case, and that you thought we should\r\nknow?”\n\nOur new visitor, a bright, handsome girl of a conventional English\r\ntype, smiled back at Holmes as she seated herself beside\r\nMr.\xa0Bennett.\n\n“When I found Mr.\xa0Bennett had left his hotel I thought I\r\nshould probably find him here. Of course, he had told me that he would\r\nconsult you. But, oh, Mr.\xa0Holmes, can you do nothing for my\r\npoor father?”\n\n“I have hopes, Miss Presbury, but the case is still obscure. Perhaps\r\nwhat you have to say may throw some fresh light upon it.”\n\n“It was last night, Mr.\xa0Holmes. He had been very strange\r\nall day. I am sure that there are times when he has no recollection of\r\nwhat he does. He lives as in a strange dream. Yesterday was such a day.\r\nIt was not my father with whom I lived. His outward shell was there, but\r\nit was not really he.”\n\n“Tell me what happened.”\n\n“I was awakened in the night by the dog barking most furiously. Poor\r\nRoy, he is chained now near the stable. I may say that I always sleep\r\nwith my door locked; for, as Jack\ufeff—as Mr.\xa0Bennett\ufeff—will tell\r\nyou, we all have a feeling of impending danger. My room is on the second\r\nfloor. It happened that the blind was up in my window, and there was\r\nbright moonlight outside. As I lay with my eyes fixed upon the square of\r\nlight, listening to the frenzied barkings of the dog, I was amazed to\r\nsee my father’s face looking in at me. Mr.\xa0Holmes, I nearly\r\ndied of surprise and horror. There it was pressed against the\r\nwindowpane, and one hand seemed to be raised as if to push up the\r\nwindow. If that window had opened, I think I should have gone mad. It\r\nwas no delusion, Mr.\xa0Holmes. Don’t deceive yourself by\r\nthinking so. I dare say it was twenty seconds or so that I lay paralyzed\r\nand watched the face. Then it vanished, but I could not\ufeff—I could not\r\nspring out of bed and look out after it. I lay cold and shivering till\r\nmorning. At breakfast he was sharp and fierce in manner, and made no\r\nallusion to the adventure of the night. Neither did I, but I gave an\r\nexcuse for coming to town\ufeff—and here I am.”\n\nHolmes looked thoroughly surprised at Miss Presbury’s narrative.\n\n“My dear young lady, you say that your room is on the second floor.\r\nIs there a long ladder in the garden?”\n\n“No, Mr.\xa0Holmes, that is the amazing part of it. There\r\nis no possible way of reaching the window\ufeff—and yet he was there.”\n\n“The date being September 5th,” said Holmes. “That certainly\r\ncomplicates matters.”\n\nIt was the young lady’s turn to look surprised. “This is the second\r\ntime that you have alluded to the date, Mr.\xa0Holmes,” said\r\nBennett. “Is it possible that it has any bearing upon the case?”\n\n“It is possible\ufeff—very possible\ufeff—and yet I have not my full material at\r\npresent.”\n\n“Possibly you are thinking of the connection between insanity and\r\nphases of the moon?”\n\n“No, I assure you. It was quite a different line of thought. Possibly\r\nyou can leave your notebook with me, and I will check the dates. Now I\r\nthink, Watson, that our line of action is perfectly clear. This young\r\nlady has informed us\ufeff—and I have the greatest confidence in her\r\nintuition\ufeff—that her father remembers little or nothing which occurs upon\r\ncertain dates. We will therefore call upon him as if he had given us an\r\nappointment upon such a date. He will put it down to his own lack of\r\nmemory. Thus we will open our campaign by having a good close view of\r\nhim.”\n\n“That is excellent,” said Mr.\xa0Bennett. “I warn you,\r\nhowever, that the professor is irascible and violent at times.”\n\nHolmes smiled. “There are reasons why we should come at once\ufeff—very\r\ncogent reasons if my theories hold good. Tomorrow,\r\nMr.\xa0Bennett, will certainly see us in Camford. There is, if\r\nI remember right, an inn called the Chequers where the port used to be\r\nabove mediocrity and the linen was above reproach. I think, Watson, that\r\nour lot for the next few days might lie in less pleasant places.”\n\nMonday morning found us on our way to the famous university town\ufeff—an\r\neasy effort on the part of Holmes, who had no roots to pull up, but one\r\nwhich involved frantic planning and hurrying on my part, as my practice\r\nwas by this time not inconsiderable. Holmes made no allusion to the case\r\nuntil after we had deposited our suitcases at the ancient hostel of\r\nwhich he had spoken.\n\n“I think, Watson, that we can catch the professor just before lunch.\r\nHe lectures at eleven and should have an interval at home.”\n\n“What possible excuse have we for calling?”\n\nHolmes glanced at his notebook.\n\n“There was a period of excitement upon August 26th. We will assume\r\nthat he is a little hazy as to what he does at such times. If we insist\r\nthat we are there by appointment I think he will hardly venture to\r\ncontradict us. Have you the effrontery necessary to put it through?”\n\n“We can but try.”\n\n“Excellent, Watson! Compound of the Busy Bee and Excelsior. We can\r\nbut try\ufeff—the motto of the firm. A friendly native will surely guide\r\nus.”\n\nSuch a one on the back of a smart hansom swept us past a row of\r\nancient colleges and, finally turning into a tree-lined drive, pulled up\r\nat the door of a charming house, girt round with lawns and covered with\r\npurple wistaria. Professor Presbury was certainly surrounded with every\r\nsign not only of comfort but of luxury. Even as we pulled up, a grizzled\r\nhead appeared at the front window, and we were aware of a pair of keen\r\neyes from under shaggy brows which surveyed us through large horn\r\nglasses. A moment later we were actually in his sanctum, and the\r\nmysterious scientist, whose vagaries had brought us from London, was\r\nstanding before us. There was certainly no sign of eccentricity either\r\nin his manner or appearance, for he was a portly, largefeatured man,\r\ngrave, tall, and frock-coated, with the dignity of bearing which a\r\nlecturer needs. His eyes were his most remarkable feature, keen,\r\nobservant, and clever to the verge of cunning.\n\nHe looked at our cards. “Pray sit down, gentlemen. What can I do for\r\nyou?”\n\nMr.\xa0Holmes smiled amiably.\n\n“It was the question which I was about to put to you, Professor.”\n\n“To me, sir!”\n\n“Possibly there is some mistake. I heard through a second person that\r\nProfessor Presbury of Camford had need of my services.”\n\n“Oh, indeed!” It seemed to me that there was a malicious sparkle in\r\nthe intense gray eyes. “You heard that, did you? May I ask the name of\r\nyour informant?”\n\n“I am sorry, Professor, but the matter was rather confidential. If I\r\nhave made a mistake there is no harm done. I can only express my\r\nregret.”\n\n“Not at all. I should wish to go further into this matter. It\r\ninterests me. Have you any scrap of writing, any letter or telegram, to\r\nbear out your assertion?”\n\n“No, I have not.”\n\n“I presume that you do not go so far as to assert that I summoned\r\nyou?”\n\n“I would rather answer no questions,” said Holmes.\n\n“No, I dare say not,” said the professor with asperity. “However,\r\nthat particular one can be answered very easily without your aid.”\n\nHe walked across the room to the bell. Our London friend\r\nMr.\xa0Bennett, answered the call.\n\n“Come in, Mr.\xa0Bennett. These two gentlemen have come\r\nfrom London under the impression that they have been summoned. You\r\nhandle all my correspondence. Have you a note of anything going to a\r\nperson named Holmes?”\n\n“No, sir,” Bennett answered with a flush.\n\n“That is conclusive,” said the professor, glaring angrily at my\r\ncompanion. “Now, sir”\ufeff—he leaned forward with his two hands upon the\r\ntable\ufeff—“it seems to me that your position is a very questionable\r\none.”\n\nHolmes shrugged his shoulders.\n\n“I can only repeat that I am sorry that we have made a needless\r\nintrusion.”\n\n“Hardly enough, Mr.\xa0Holmes!” the old man cried in a high\r\nscreaming voice, with extraordinary malignancy upon his face. He got\r\nbetween us and the door as he spoke, and he shook his two hands at us\r\nwith furious passion. “You can hardly get out of it so easily as that.”\r\nHis face was convulsed, and he grinned and gibbered at us in his\r\nsenseless rage. I am convinced that we should have had to fight our way\r\nout of the room if Mr.\xa0Bennett had not intervened.\n\n“My dear Professor,” he cried, “consider your position! Consider the\r\nscandal at the university! Mr.\xa0Holmes is a well-known man.\r\nYou cannot possibly treat him with such discourtesy.”\n\nSulkily our host\ufeff—if I may call him so\ufeff—cleared the path to the door.\r\nWe were glad to find ourselves outside the house and in the quiet of the\r\ntree-lined drive. Holmes seemed greatly amused by the episode.\n\n“Our learned friend’s nerves are somewhat out of order,” said he.\r\n“Perhaps our intrusion was a little crude, and yet we have gained that\r\npersonal contact which I desired. But, dear me, Watson, he is surely at\r\nour heels. The villain still pursues us.”\n\nThere were the sounds of running feet behind, but it was, to my\r\nrelief, not the formidable professor but his assistant who appeared\r\nround the curve of the drive. He came panting up to us.\n\n“I am so sorry, Mr.\xa0Holmes. I wished to apologize.”\n\n“My dear sir, there is no need. It is all in the way of professional\r\nexperience.”\n\n“I have never seen him in a more dangerous mood. But he grows more\r\nsinister. You can understand now why his daughter and I are alarmed. And\r\nyet his mind is perfectly clear.”\n\n“Too clear!” said Holmes. “That was my miscalculation. It is evident\r\nthat his memory is much more reliable than I had thought. By the way,\r\ncan we, before we go, see the window of Miss Presbury’s room?”\n\nMr.\xa0Bennett pushed his way through some shrubs, and we\r\nhad a view of the side of the house.\n\n“It is there. The second on the left.”\n\n“Dear me, it seems hardly accessible. And yet you will observe that\r\nthere is a creeper below and a water-pipe above which give some\r\nfoothold.”\n\n“I could not climb it myself,” said Mr.\xa0Bennett.\n\n“Very likely. It would certainly be a dangerous exploit for any\r\nnormal man.”\n\n“There was one other thing I wish to tell you,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes. I have the address of the man in London to whom\r\nthe professor writes. He seems to have written this morning, and I got\r\nit from his blotting-paper. It is an ignoble position for a trusted\r\nsecretary, but what else can I do?”\n\nHolmes glanced at the paper and put it into his pocket.\n\n“Dorak\ufeff—a curious name. Slavonic, I imagine. Well, it is an important\r\nlink in the chain. We return to London this afternoon,\r\nMr.\xa0Bennett. I see no good purpose to be served by our\r\nremaining. We cannot arrest the professor because he has done no crime,\r\nnor can we place him under constraint, for he cannot be proved to be\r\nmad. No action is as yet possible.”\n\n“Then what on earth are we to do?”\n\n“A little patience, Mr.\xa0Bennett. Things will soon\r\ndevelop. Unless I am mistaken, next Tuesday may mark a crisis. Certainly\r\nwe shall be in Camford on that day. Meanwhile, the general position is\r\nundeniably unpleasant, and if Miss Presbury can prolong her visit\ufeff—”\n\n“That is easy.”\n\n“Then let her stay till we can assure her that all danger is past.\r\nMeanwhile, let him have his way and do not cross him. So long as he is\r\nin a good humour all is well.”\n\n“There he is!” said Bennett in a startled whisper. Looking between\r\nthe branches we saw the tall, erect figure emerge from the hall door and\r\nlook around him. He stood leaning forward, his hands swinging straight\r\nbefore him, his head turning from side to side. The secretary with a\r\nlast wave slipped off among the trees, and we saw him presently rejoin\r\nhis employer, the two entering the house together in what seemed to be\r\nanimated and even excited conversation.\n\n“I expect the old gentleman has been putting two and two together,”\r\nsaid Holmes as we walked hotelward. “He struck me as having a\r\nparticularly clear and logical brain from the little I saw of him.\r\nExplosive, no doubt, but then from his point of view he has something to\r\nexplode about if detectives are put on his track and he suspects his own\r\nhousehold of doing it. I rather fancy that friend Bennett is in for an\r\nuncomfortable time.”\n\nHolmes stopped at a post-office and sent off a telegram on our way.\r\nThe answer reached us in the evening, and he tossed it across to me.\n\nHave visited the Commercial Road and seen Dorak. Suave person,\r\nBohemian, elderly. Keeps large general store.\n\nMercer\n\n“Mercer is since your time,” said Holmes. “He is my general utility\r\nman who looks up routine business. It was important to know something of\r\nthe man with whom our professor was so secretly corresponding. His\r\nnationality connects up with the Prague visit.”\n\n“Thank goodness that something connects with something,” said I. “At\r\npresent we seem to be faced by a long series of inexplicable incidents\r\nwith no bearing upon each other. For example, what possible connection\r\ncan there be between an angry wolfhound and a visit to Bohemia, or\r\neither of them with a man crawling down a passage at night? As to your\r\ndates, that is the biggest mystification of all.”\n\nHolmes smiled and rubbed his hands. We were, I may say, seated in the\r\nold sitting-room of the ancient hotel, with a bottle of the famous\r\nvintage of which Holmes had spoken on the table between us.\n\n“Well, now, let us take the dates first,” said he, his fingertips\r\ntogether and his manner as if he were addressing a class. “This\r\nexcellent young man’s diary shows that there was trouble upon July 2nd,\r\nand from then onward it seems to have been at nine-day intervals, with,\r\nso far as I remember, only one exception. Thus the last outbreak upon\r\nFriday was on September 3rd, which also falls into the series, as did\r\nAugust 26th, which preceded it. The thing is beyond coincidence.”\n\nI was forced to agree.\n\n“Let us, then, form the provisional theory that every nine days the\r\nprofessor takes some strong drug which has a passing but highly\r\npoisonous effect. His naturally violent nature is intensified by it. He\r\nlearned to take this drug while he was in Prague, and is now supplied\r\nwith it by a Bohemian intermediary in London. This all hangs together,\r\nWatson!”\n\n“But the dog, the face at the window, the creeping man in the\r\npassage?”\n\n“Well, well, we have made a beginning. I should not expect any fresh\r\ndevelopments until next Tuesday. In the meantime we can only keep in\r\ntouch with friend Bennett and enjoy the amenities of this charming\r\ntown.”\n\nIn the morning Mr.\xa0Bennett slipped round to bring us the\r\nlatest report. As Holmes had imagined, times had not been easy with him.\r\nWithout exactly accusing him of being responsible for our presence, the\r\nprofessor had been very rough and rude in his speech, and evidently felt\r\nsome strong grievance. This morning he was quite himself again, however,\r\nand had delivered his usual brilliant lecture to a crowded class. “Apart\r\nfrom his queer fits,” said Bennett, “he has actually more energy and\r\nvitality than I can ever remember, nor was his brain ever clearer. But\r\nit’s not he\ufeff—it’s never the man whom we have known.”\n\n“I don’t think you have anything to fear now for a week at least,”\r\nHolmes answered. “I am a busy man, and Dr.\xa0Watson has his\r\npatients to attend to. Let us agree that we meet here at this hour next\r\nTuesday, and I shall be surprised if before we leave you again we are\r\nnot able to explain, even if we cannot perhaps put an end to, your\r\ntroubles. Meanwhile, keep us posted in what occurs.”\n\nI saw nothing of my friend for the next few days, but on the\r\nfollowing Monday evening I had a short note asking me to meet him next\r\nday at the train. From what he told me as we travelled up to Camford all\r\nwas well, the peace of the professor’s house had been unruffled, and his\r\nown conduct perfectly normal. This also was the report which was given\r\nus by Mr.\xa0Bennett himself when he called upon us that\r\nevening at our old quarters in the Chequers. “He heard from his London\r\ncorrespondent today. There was a letter and there was a small packet,\r\neach with the cross under the stamp which warned me not to touch them.\r\nThere has been nothing else.”\n\n“That may prove quite enough,” said Holmes grimly. “Now,\r\nMr.\xa0Bennett, we shall, I think, come to some conclusion\r\ntonight. If my deductions are correct we should have an opportunity of\r\nbringing matters to a head. In order to do so it is necessary to hold\r\nthe professor under observation. I would suggest, therefore, that you\r\nremain awake and on the lookout. Should you hear him pass your door, do\r\nnot interrupt him, but follow him as discreetly as you can.\r\nDr.\xa0Watson and I will not be far off. By the way, where is\r\nthe key of that little box of which you spoke?”\n\n“Upon his watch-chain.”\n\n“I fancy our researches must lie in that direction. At the worst the\r\nlock should not be very formidable. Have you any other able-bodied man\r\non the premises?”\n\n“There is the coachman, Macphail.”\n\n“Where does he sleep?”\n\n“Over the stables.”\n\n“We might possibly want him. Well, we can do no more until we see how\r\nthings develop, Goodbye\ufeff—but I expect that we shall see you before\r\nmorning.”\n\nIt was nearly midnight before we took our station among some bushes\r\nimmediately opposite the hall door of the professor. It was a fine\r\nnight, but chilly, and we were glad of our warm overcoats. There was a\r\nbreeze, and clouds were scudding across the sky, obscuring from time to\r\ntime the half-moon. It would have been a dismal vigil were it not for\r\nthe expectation and excitement which carried us along, and the assurance\r\nof my comrade that we had probably reached the end of the strange\r\nsequence of events which had engaged our attention.\n\n“If the cycle of nine days holds good then we shall have the\r\nprofessor at his worst tonight,” said Holmes. “The fact that these\r\nstrange symptoms began after his visit to Prague, that he is in secret\r\ncorrespondence with a Bohemian dealer in London, who presumably\r\nrepresents someone in Prague, and that he received a packet from him\r\nthis very day, all point in one direction. What he takes and why he\r\ntakes it are still beyond our ken, but that it emanates in some way from\r\nPrague is clear enough. He takes it under definite directions which\r\nregulate this ninth-day system, which was the first point which\r\nattracted my attention. But his symptoms are most remarkable. Did you\r\nobserve his knuckles?”\n\nI had to confess that I did not.\n\n“Thick and horny in a way which is quite new in my experience. Always\r\nlook at the hands first, Watson. Then cuffs, trouserknees, and boots.\r\nVery curious knuckles which can only be explained by the mode of\r\nprogression observed by\ufeff—” Holmes paused and suddenly clapped his hand to\r\nhis forehead. “Oh, Watson, Watson, what a fool I have been! It seems\r\nincredible, and yet it must be true. All points in one direction. How\r\ncould I miss seeing the connection of ideas? Those knuckles how could I\r\nhave passed those knuckles? And the dog! And the ivy! It’s surely time\r\nthat I disappeared into that little farm of my dreams. Look out, Watson!\r\nHere he is! We shall have the chance of seeing for ourselves.”\n\nThe hall door had slowly opened, and against the lamplit background\r\nwe saw the tall figure of Professor Presbury. He was clad in his\r\ndressing gown. As he stood outlined in the doorway he was erect but\r\nleaning forward with dangling arms, as when we saw him last.\n\nNow he stepped forward into the drive, and an extraordinary change\r\ncame over him. He sank down into a crouching position and moved along\r\nupon his hands and feet, skipping every now and then as if he were\r\noverflowing with energy and vitality. He moved along the face of the\r\nhouse and then round the corner. As he disappeared Bennett slipped\r\nthrough the hall door and softly followed him.\n\n“Come, Watson, come!” cried Holmes, and we stole as softly as we\r\ncould through the bushes until we had gained a spot whence we could see\r\nthe other side of the house, which was bathed in the light of the\r\nhalf-moon. The professor was clearly visible crouching at the foot of\r\nthe ivy-covered wall. As we watched him he suddenly began with\r\nincredible agility to ascend it. From branch to branch he sprang, sure\r\nof foot and firm of grasp, climbing apparently in mere joy at his own\r\npowers, with no definite object in view. With his dressing-gown flapping\r\non each side of him, he looked like some huge bat glued against the side\r\nof his own house, a great square dark patch upon the moonlit wall.\r\nPresently he tired of this amusement, and, dropping from branch to\r\nbranch, he squatted down into the old attitude and moved towards the\r\nstables, creeping along in the same strange way as before. The wolfhound\r\nwas out now, barking furiously, and more excited than ever when it\r\nactually caught sight of its master. It was straining on its chain and\r\nquivering with eagerness and rage. The professor squatted down very\r\ndeliberately just out of reach of the hound and began to provoke it in\r\nevery possible way. He took handfuls of pebbles from the drive and threw\r\nthem in the dog’s face, prodded him with a stick which he had picked up,\r\nflicked his hands about only a few inches from the gaping mouth, and\r\nendeavoured in every way to increase the animal’s fury, which was\r\nalready beyond all control. In all our adventures I do not know that I\r\nhave ever seen a more strange sight than this impassive and still\r\ndignified figure crouching frog-like upon the ground and goading to a\r\nwilder exhibition of passion the maddened hound, which ramped and raged\r\nin front of him, by all manner of ingenious and calculated cruelty.\n\nAnd then in a moment it happened! It was not the chain that broke,\r\nbut it was the collar that slipped, for it had been made for a\r\nthick-necked Newfoundland. We heard the rattle of falling metal, and the\r\nnext instant dog and man were rolling on the ground together, the one\r\nroaring in rage, the other screaming in a strange shrill falsetto of\r\nterror. It was a very narrow thing for the professor’s life. The savage\r\ncreature had him fairly by the throat, its fangs had bitten deep, and he\r\nwas senseless before we could reach them and drag the two apart. It\r\nmight have been a dangerous task for us, but Bennett’s voice and\r\npresence brought the great wolflhound instantly to reason. The uproar\r\nhad brought the sleepy and astonished coachman from his room above the\r\nstables. “I’m not surprised,” said he, shaking his head. “I’ve seen him\r\nat it before. I knew the dog would get him sooner or later.”\n\nThe hound was secured, and together we carried the professor up to\r\nhis room, where Bennett, who had a medical degree, helped me to dress\r\nhis torn throat. The sharp teeth had passed dangerously near the carotid\r\nartery, and the haemorrhage was serious. In half an hour the danger was\r\npast, I had given the patient an injection of morphia, and he had sunk\r\ninto deep sleep. Then, and only then, were we able to look at each other\r\nand to take stock of the situation.\n\n“I think a first-class surgeon should see him,” said I.\n\n“For God’s sake, no!” cried Bennett. “At present the scandal is\r\nconfined to our own household. It is safe with us. If it gets beyond\r\nthese walls it will never stop. Consider his position at the university,\r\nhis European reputation, the feelings of his daughter.”\n\n“Quite so,” said Holmes. “I think it may be quite possible to keep\r\nthe matter to ourselves, and also to prevent its recurrence now that we\r\nhave a free hand. The key from the watch-chain,\r\nMr.\xa0Bennett. Macphail will guard the patient and let us\r\nknow if there is any change. Let us see what we can find in the\r\nprofessor’s mysterious box.”\n\nThere was not much, but there was enough\ufeff—an empty phial, another\r\nnearly full, a hypodermic syringe, several letters in a crabbed, foreign\r\nhand. The marks on the envelopes showed that they were those which had\r\ndisturbed the routine of the secretary, and each was dated from the\r\nCommercial Road and signed “A. Dorak.” They were mere invoices to say\r\nthat a fresh bottle was being sent to Professor Presbury, or receipt to\r\nacknowledge money. There was one other envelope, however, in a more\r\neducated hand and bearing the Austrian stamp with the postmark of\r\nPrague. “Here we have our material!” cried Holmes as he tore out the\r\nenclosure.\n\nHonoured\r\nColleague [it ran]:\n\nSince your esteemed visit I have thought much of your case, and\r\nthough in your circumstances there are some special reasons for the\r\ntreatment, I would none the less enjoin caution, as my results have\r\nshown that it is not without danger of a kind. It is possible that the\r\nserum of anthropoid would have been better. I have, as I explained to\r\nyou, used black-faced langur because a specimen was accessible. Langur\r\nis, of course, a crawler and climber, while anthropoid walks erect and\r\nis in all ways nearer. I beg you to take every possible precaution that\r\nthere be no premature revelation of the process. I have one other client\r\nin England, and Dorak is my agent for both. Weekly reports will\r\noblige.\n\nYours with high esteem,\n\nH. Lowenstein\n\nLowenstein! The name brought back to me the memory of some snippet\r\nfrom a newspaper which spoke of an obscure scientist who was striving in\r\nsome unknown way for the secret of rejuvenescence and the elixir of\r\nlife. Lowenstein of Prague! Lowenstein with the wondrous strength-giving\r\nserum, tabooed by the profession because he refused to reveal its\r\nsource. In a few words I said what I remembered. Bennett had taken a\r\nmanual of zoology from the shelves. “\u200a‘Langur,’\u200a” he read, “\u200a‘the great\r\nblack-faced monkey of the Himalayan slopes, biggest and most human of\r\nclimbing monkeys.’ Many details are added. Well, thanks to you,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes, it is very clear that we have traced the evil\r\nto its source.”\n\n“The real source,” said Holmes, “lies, of course, in that untimely\r\nlove affair which gave our impetuous professor the idea that he could\r\nonly gain his wish by turning himself into a younger man. When one tries\r\nto rise above Nature one is liable to fall below it. The highest type of\r\nman may revert to the animal if he leaves the straight road of destiny.”\r\nHe sat musing for a little with the phial in his hand, looking at the\r\nclear liquid within. “When I have written to this man and told him that\r\nI hold him criminally responsible for the poisons which he circulates,\r\nwe will have no more trouble. But it may recur. Others may find a better\r\nway. There is danger there\ufeff—a very real danger to humanity. Consider,\r\nWatson, that the material, the sensual, the worldly would all prolong\r\ntheir worthless lives. The spiritual would not avoid the call to\r\nsomething higher. It would be the survival of the least fit. What sort\r\nof cesspool may not our poor world become?” Suddenly the dreamer\r\ndisappeared, and Holmes, the man of action, sprang from his chair. “I\r\nthink there is nothing more to be said, Mr.\xa0Bennett. The\r\nvarious incidents will now fit themselves easily into the general\r\nscheme. The dog, of course, was aware of the change far more quickly\r\nthan you. His smell would insure that. It was the monkey, not the\r\nprofessor, whom Roy attacked, just as it was the monkey who teased Roy.\r\nClimbing was a joy to the creature, and it was a mere chance, I take it,\r\nthat the pastime brought him to the young lady’s window. There is an\r\nearly train to town, Watson, but I think we shall just have time for a\r\ncup of tea at the Chequers before we catch it.”\n\nThe Adventure of the Lion’s Mane\n\nIt is a most singular thing that a problem which was certainly as\r\nabstruse and unusual as any which I have faced in my long professional\r\ncareer should have come to me after my retirement, and be brought, as it\r\nwere, to my very door. It occurred after my withdrawal to my little\r\nSussex home, when I had given myself up entirely to that soothing life\r\nof Nature for which I had so often yearned during the long years spent\r\namid the gloom of London. At this period of my life the good Watson had\r\npassed almost beyond my ken. An occasional weekend visit was the most\r\nthat I ever saw of him. Thus I must act as my own chronicler. Ah! had he\r\nbut been with me, how much he might have made of so wonderful a\r\nhappening and of my eventual triumph against every difficulty! As it is,\r\nhowever, I must needs tell my tale in my own plain way, showing by my\r\nwords each step upon the difficult road which lay before me as I\r\nsearched for the mystery of the Lion’s Mane.\n\nMy villa is situated upon the southern slope of the downs, commanding\r\na great view of the Channel. At this point the coastline is entirely of\r\nchalk cliffs, which can only be descended by a single, long, tortuous\r\npath, which is steep and slippery. At the bottom of the path lie a\r\nhundred yards of pebbles and shingle, even when the tide is at full.\r\nHere and there, however, there are curves and hollows which make\r\nsplendid swimming-pools filled afresh with each flow. This admirable\r\nbeach extends for some miles in each direction, save only at one point\r\nwhere the little cove and village of Fulworth break the line.\n\nMy house is lonely. I, my old housekeeper, and my bees have the\r\nestate all to ourselves. Half a mile off, however, is Harold\r\nStackhurst’s well-known coaching establishment, The Gables, quite a\r\nlarge place, which contains some score of young fellows preparing for\r\nvarious professions, with a staff of several masters. Stackhurst himself\r\nwas a well-known rowing Blue in his day, and an excellent all-round\r\nscholar. He and I were always friendly from the day I came to the coast,\r\nand he was the one man who was on such terms with me that we could drop\r\nin on each other in the evenings without an invitation.\n\nTowards the end of July, 1907, there was a severe gale, the wind\r\nblowing up-channel, heaping the seas to the base of the cliffs and\r\nleaving a lagoon at the turn of the tide. On the morning of which I\r\nspeak the wind had abated, and all Nature was newly washed and fresh. It\r\nwas impossible to work upon so delightful a day, and I strolled out\r\nbefore breakfast to enjoy the exquisite air. I walked along the cliff\r\npath which led to the steep descent to the beach. As I walked I heard a\r\nshout behind me, and there was Harold Stackhurst waving his hand in\r\ncheery greeting.\n\n“What a morning, Mr.\xa0Holmes! I thought I should see you\r\nout.”\n\n“Going for a swim, I see.”\n\n“At your old tricks again,” he laughed, patting his bulging pocket.\r\n“Yes. McPherson started early, and I expect I may find him there.”\n\nFitzroy McPherson was the science master, a fine upstanding young\r\nfellow whose life had been crippled by heart trouble following rheumatic\r\nfever. He was a natural athlete, however, and excelled in every game\r\nwhich did not throw too great a strain upon him. Summer and winter he\r\nwent for his swim, and, as I am a swimmer myself, I have often joined\r\nhim.\n\nAt this moment we saw the man himself. His head showed above the edge\r\nof the cliff where the path ends. Then his whole figure appeared at the\r\ntop, staggering like a drunken man. The next instant he threw up his\r\nhands and, with a terrible cry, fell upon his face. Stackhurst and I\r\nrushed forward\ufeff—it may have been fifty yards\ufeff—and turned him on his back.\r\nHe was obviously dying. Those glazed sunken eyes and dreadful livid\r\ncheeks could mean nothing else. One glimmer of life came into his face\r\nfor an instant, and he uttered two or three words with an eager air of\r\nwarning. They were slurred and indistinct, but to my ear the last of\r\nthem, which burst in a shriek from his lips, were “the Lion’s Mane.” It\r\nwas utterly irrelevant and unintelligible, and yet I could twist the\r\nsound into no other sense. Then he half raised himself from the ground,\r\nthrew his arms into the air, and fell forward on his side. He was\r\ndead.\n\nMy companion was paralyzed by the sudden horror of it, but I, as may\r\nwell be imagined, had every sense on the alert. And I had need, for it\r\nwas speedily evident that we were in the presence of an extraordinary\r\ncase. The man was dressed only in his Burberry overcoat, his trousers,\r\nand an unlaced pair of canvas shoes. As he fell over, his Burberry,\r\nwhich had been simply thrown round his shoulders, slipped off, exposing\r\nhis trunk. We stared at it in amazement. His back was covered with dark\r\nred lines as though he had been terribly flogged by a thin wire scourge.\r\nThe instrument with which this punishment had been inflicted was clearly\r\nflexible, for the long, angry weals curved round his shoulders and ribs.\r\nThere was blood dripping down his chin, for he had bitten through his\r\nlower lip in the paroxysm of his agony. His drawn and distorted face\r\ntold how terrible that agony had been.\n\nI was kneeling and Stackhurst standing by the body when a shadow fell\r\nacross us, and we found that Ian Murdoch was by our side. Murdoch was\r\nthe mathematical coach at the establishment, a tall, dark, thin man, so\r\ntaciturn and aloof that none can be said to have been his friend. He\r\nseemed to live in some high abstract region of surds and conic sections,\r\nwith little to connect him with ordinary life. He was looked upon as an\r\noddity by the students, and would have been their butt, but there was\r\nsome strange outlandish blood in the man, which showed itself not only\r\nin his coal-black eyes and swarthy face but also in occasional outbreaks\r\nof temper, which could only be described as ferocious. On one occasion,\r\nbeing plagued by a little dog belonging to McPherson, he had caught the\r\ncreature up and hurled it through the plate-glass window, an action for\r\nwhich Stackhurst would certainly have given him his dismissal had he not\r\nbeen a very valuable teacher. Such was the strange complex man who now\r\nappeared beside us. He seemed to be honestly shocked at the sight before\r\nhim, though the incident of the dog may show that there was no great\r\nsympathy between the dead man and himself.\n\n“Poor fellow! Poor fellow! What can I do? How can I help?”\n\n“Were you with him? Can you tell us what has happened?”\n\n“No, no, I was late this morning. I was not on the beach at all. I\r\nhave come straight from The Gables. What can I do?”\n\n“You can hurry to the police-station at Fulworth. Report the matter\r\nat once.”\n\nWithout a word he made off at top speed, and I proceeded to take the\r\nmatter in hand, while Stackhurst, dazed at this tragedy, remained by the\r\nbody. My first task naturally was to note who was on the beach. From the\r\ntop of the path I could see the whole sweep of it, and it was absolutely\r\ndeserted save that two or three dark figures could be seen far away\r\nmoving towards the village of Fulworth. Having satisfied myself upon\r\nthis point, I walked slowly down the path. There was clay or soft marl\r\nmixed with the chalk, and every here and there I saw the same footstep,\r\nboth ascending and descending. No one else had gone down to the beach by\r\nthis track that morning. At one place I observed the print of an open\r\nhand with the fingers towards the incline. This could only mean that\r\npoor McPherson had fallen as he ascended. There were rounded\r\ndepressions, too, which suggested that he had come down upon his knees\r\nmore than once. At the bottom of the path was the considerable lagoon\r\nleft by the retreating tide. At the side of it McPherson had undressed,\r\nfor there lay his towel on a rock. It was folded and dry, so that it\r\nwould seem that, after all, he had never entered the water. Once or\r\ntwice as I hunted round amid the hard shingle I came on little patches\r\nof sand where the print of his canvas shoe, and also of his naked foot,\r\ncould be seen. The latter fact proved that he had made all ready to\r\nbathe, though the towel indicated that he had not actually done so.\n\nAnd here was the problem clearly defined\ufeff—as strange a one as had ever\r\nconfronted me. The man had not been on the beach more than a quarter of\r\nan hour at the most. Stackhurst had followed him from The Gables, so\r\nthere could be no doubt about that. He had gone to bathe and had\r\nstripped, as the naked footsteps showed. Then he had suddenly huddled on\r\nhis clothes again\ufeff—they were all dishevelled and unfastened\ufeff—and he had\r\nreturned without bathing, or at any rate without drying himself. And the\r\nreason for his change of purpose had been that he had been scourged in\r\nsome savage, inhuman fashion, tortured until he bit his lip through in\r\nhis agony, and was left with only strength enough to crawl away and to\r\ndie. Who had done this barbarous deed? There were, it is true, small\r\ngrottos and caves in the base of the cliffs, but the low sun shone\r\ndirectly into them, and there was no place for concealment. Then, again,\r\nthere were those distant figures on the beach. They seemed too far away\r\nto have been connected with the crime, and the broad lagoon in which\r\nMcPherson had intended to bathe lay between him and them, lapping up to\r\nthe rocks. On the sea two or three fishing-boats were at no great\r\ndistance. Their occupants might be examined at our leisure. There were\r\nseveral roads for inquiry, but none which led to any very obvious\r\ngoal.\n\nWhen I at last returned to the body I found that a little group of\r\nwondering folk had gathered round it. Stackhurst was, of course, still\r\nthere, and Ian Murdoch had just arrived with Anderson, the village\r\nconstable, a big, ginger-moustached man of the slow, solid Sussex\r\nbreed\ufeff—a breed which covers much good sense under a heavy, silent\r\nexterior. He listened to everything, took note of all we said, and\r\nfinally drew me aside.\n\n“I’d be glad of your advice, Mr.\xa0Holmes. This is a big\r\nthing for me to handle, and I’ll hear of it from Lewes if I go\r\nwrong.”\n\nI advised him to send for his immediate superior, and for a doctor;\r\nalso to allow nothing to be moved, and as few fresh footmarks as\r\npossible to be made, until they came. In the meantime I searched the\r\ndead man’s pockets. There were his handkerchief, a large knife, and a\r\nsmall folding card-case. From this projected a slip of paper, which I\r\nunfolded and handed to the constable. There was written on it in a\r\nscrawling, feminine hand:\n\nI will be there, you may be sure.\n\nMaudie\n\nIt read like a love affair, an assignation, though when and where\r\nwere a blank. The constable replaced it in the card-case and returned it\r\nwith the other things to the pockets of the Burberry. Then, as nothing\r\nmore suggested itself, I walked back to my house for breakfast, having\r\nfirst arranged that the base of the cliffs should be thoroughly\r\nsearched.\n\nStackhurst was round in an hour or two to tell me that the body had\r\nbeen removed to The Gables, where the inquest would be held. He brought\r\nwith him some serious and definite news. As I expected, nothing had been\r\nfound in the small caves below the cliff, but he had examined the papers\r\nin McPherson’s desk and there were several which showed an intimate\r\ncorrespondence with a certain Miss Maud Bellamy, of Fulworth. We had\r\nthen established the identity of the writer of the note.\n\n“The police have the letters,” he explained. “I could not bring them.\r\nBut there is no doubt that it was a serious love affair. I see no\r\nreason, however, to connect it with that horrible happening save,\r\nindeed, that the lady had made an appointment with him.”\n\n“But hardly at a bathing-pool which all of you were in the habit of\r\nusing,” I remarked.\n\n“It is mere chance,” said he, “that several of the students were not\r\nwith McPherson.”\n\n“Was it mere chance?”\n\nStackhurst knit his brows in thought.\n\n“Ian Murdoch held them back,” said he. “He would insist upon some\r\nalgebraic demonstration before breakfast. Poor chap, he is dreadfully\r\ncut up about it all.”\n\n“And yet I gather that they were not friends.”\n\n“At one time they were not. But for a year or more Murdoch has been\r\nas near to McPherson as he ever could be to anyone. He is not of a very\r\nsympathetic disposition by nature.”\n\n“So I understand. I seem to remember your telling me once about a\r\nquarrel over the ill-usage of a dog.”\n\n“That blew over all right.”\n\n“But left some vindictive feeling, perhaps.”\n\n“No, no, I am sure they were real friends.”\n\n“Well, then, we must explore the matter of the girl. Do you know\r\nher?”\n\n“Everyone knows her. She is the beauty of the neighbourhood\ufeff—a real\r\nbeauty, Holmes, who would draw attention everywhere. I knew that\r\nMcPherson was attracted by her, but I had no notion that it had gone so\r\nfar as these letters would seem to indicate.”\n\n“But who is she?”\n\n“She is the daughter of old Tom Bellamy who owns all the boats and\r\nbathing-cots at Fulworth. He was a fisherman to start with, but is now a\r\nman of some substance. He and his son William run the business.”\n\n“Shall we walk into Fulworth and see them?”\n\n“On what pretext?”\n\n“Oh, we can easily find a pretext. After all, this poor man did not\r\nill-use himself in this outrageous way. Some human hand was on the\r\nhandle of that scourge, if indeed it was a scourge which inflicted the\r\ninjuries. His circle of acquaintances in this lonely place was surely\r\nlimited. Let us follow it up in every direction and we can hardly fail\r\nto come upon the motive, which in turn should lead us to the\r\ncriminal.”\n\nIt would have been a pleasant walk across the thyme-scented downs had\r\nour minds not been poisoned by the tragedy we had witnessed. The village\r\nof Fulworth lies in a hollow curving in a semicircle round the bay.\r\nBehind the old-fashioned hamlet several modern houses have been built\r\nupon the rising ground. It was to one of these that Stackhurst guided\r\nme.\n\n“That’s The Haven, as Bellamy called it. The one with the corner\r\ntower and slate roof. Not bad for a man who started with nothing but\ufeff—By\r\nJove, look at that!”\n\nThe garden gate of The Haven had opened and a man had emerged. There\r\nwas no mistaking that tall, angular, straggling figure. It was Ian\r\nMurdoch, the mathematician. A moment later we confronted him upon the\r\nroad.\n\n“Hullo!” said Stackhurst. The man nodded, gave us a sideways glance\r\nfrom his curious dark eyes, and would have-passed us, but his principal\r\npulled him up.\n\n“What were you doing there?” he asked.\n\nMurdoch’s face flushed with anger. “I am your subordinate, sir, under\r\nyour roof. I am not aware that I owe you any account of my private\r\nactions.”\n\nStackhurst’s nerves were near the surface after all he had endured.\r\nOtherwise, perhaps, he would have waited. Now he lost his temper\r\ncompletely.\n\n“In the circumstances your answer is pure impertinence,\r\nMr.\xa0Murdoch.”\n\n“Your own question might perhaps come under the same heading.”\n\n“This is not the first time that I have had to overlook your\r\ninsubordinate ways. It will certainly be the last. You will kindly make\r\nfresh arrangements for your future as speedily as you can.”\n\n“I had intended to do so. I have lost today the only person who made\r\nThe Gables habitable.”\n\nHe strode off upon his way, while Stackhurst, with angry eyes, stood\r\nglaring after him. “Is he not an impossible, intolerable man?” he\r\ncried.\n\nThe one thing that impressed itself forcibly upon my mind was that\r\nMr.\xa0Ian Murdoch was taking the first chance to open a path\r\nof escape from the scene of the crime. Suspicion, vague and nebulous,\r\nwas now beginning to take outline in my mind. Perhaps the visit to the\r\nBellamys might throw some further light upon the matter. Stackhurst\r\npulled himself together, and we went forward to the house.\n\nMr.\xa0Bellamy proved to be a middle-aged man with a\r\nflaming red beard. He seemed to be in a very angry mood, and his face\r\nwas soon as florid as his hair.\n\n“No, sir, I do not desire any particulars. My son here”\ufeff—indicating a\r\npowerful young man, with a heavy, sullen face, in the corner of the\r\nsitting-room\ufeff—“is of one mind with me that Mr.\xa0McPherson’s\r\nattentions to Maud were insulting. Yes, sir, the word ‘marriage’ was\r\nnever mentioned, and yet there were letters and meetings, and a great\r\ndeal more of which neither of us could approve. She has no mother, and\r\nwe are her only guardians. We are determined\ufeff—”\n\nBut the words were taken from his mouth by the appearance of the lady\r\nherself. There was no gainsaying that she would have graced any assembly\r\nin the world. Who could have imagined that so rare a flower would grow\r\nfrom such a root and in such an atmosphere? Women have seldom been an\r\nattraction to me, for my brain has always governed my heart, but I could\r\nnot look upon her perfect clear-cut face, with all the soft freshness of\r\nthe downlands in her delicate colouring, without realizing that no young\r\nman would cross her path unscathed. Such was the girl who had pushed\r\nopen the door and stood now, wide-eyed and intense, in front of Harold\r\nStackhurst.\n\n“I know already that Fitzroy is dead,” she said. “Do not be afraid to\r\ntell me the particulars.”\n\n“This other gentleman of yours let us know the news,” explained the\r\nfather.\n\n“There is no reason why my sister should be brought into the matter,”\r\ngrowled the younger man.\n\nThe sister turned a sharp, fierce look upon him. “This is my\r\nbusiness, William. Kindly leave me to manage it in my own way. By all\r\naccounts there has been a crime committed. If I can help to show who did\r\nit, it is the least I can do for him who is gone.”\n\nShe listened to a short account from my companion, with a composed\r\nconcentration which showed me that she possessed strong character as\r\nwell as great beauty. Maud Bellamy will always remain in my memory as a\r\nmost complete and remarkable woman. It seems that she already knew me by\r\nsight, for she turned to me at the end.\n\n“Bring them to justice, Mr.\xa0Holmes. You have my sympathy\r\nand my help, whoever they may be.” It seemed to me that she glanced\r\ndefiantly at her father and brother as she spoke.\n\n“Thank you,” said I. “I value a woman’s instinct in such matters. You\r\nuse the word ‘they.’ You think that more than one was concerned?”\n\n“I knew Mr.\xa0McPherson well enough to be aware that he\r\nwas a brave and a strong man. No single person could ever have inflicted\r\nsuch an outrage upon him.”\n\n“Might I have one word with you alone?”\n\n“I tell you, Maud, not to mix yourself up in the matter,” cried her\r\nfather angrily.\n\nShe looked at me helplessly. “What can I do?”\n\n“The whole world will know the facts presently, so there can be no\r\nharm if I discuss them here,” said I. “I should have preferred privacy,\r\nbut if your father will not allow it he must share the deliberations.”\r\nThen I spoke of the note which had been found in the dead man’s pocket.\r\n“It is sure to be produced at the inquest. May I ask you to throw any\r\nlight upon it that you can?”\n\n“I see no reason for mystery,” she answered. “We were engaged to be\r\nmarried, and we only kept it secret because Fitzroy’s uncle, who is very\r\nold and said to be dying, might have disinherited him if he had married\r\nagainst his wish. There was no other reason.”\n\n“You could have told us,” growled Mr.\xa0Bellamy.\n\n“So I would, father, if you had ever shown sympathy.”\n\n“I object to my girl picking up with men outside her own\r\nstation.”\n\n“It was your prejudice against him which prevented us from telling\r\nyou. As to this appointment”\ufeff—she fumbled in her dress and produced a\r\ncrumpled note\ufeff—“it was in answer to this.”\n\nDearest [ran\r\nthe message]:\n\nThe old place on the beach just after sunset on Tuesday. It is the\r\nonly time I can get away.\n\nF. M.\n\n“Tuesday was today, and I had meant to meet him tonight.”\n\nI turned over the paper. “This never came by post. How did you get\r\nit?”\n\n“I would rather not answer that question. It has really nothing to do\r\nwith the matter which you are investigating. But anything which bears\r\nupon that I will most freely answer.”\n\nShe was as good as her word, but there was nothing which was helpful\r\nin our investigation. She had no reason to think that her fiancé had any\r\nhidden enemy, but she admitted that she had had several warm\r\nadmirers.\n\n“May I ask if Mr.\xa0Ian Murdoch was one of them?”\n\nShe blushed and seemed confused.\n\n“There was a time when I thought he was. But that was all changed\r\nwhen he understood the relations between Fitzroy and myself.”\n\nAgain the shadow round this strange man seemed to me to be taking\r\nmore definite shape. His record must be examined. His rooms must be\r\nprivately searched. Stackhurst was a willing collaborator, for in his\r\nmind also suspicions were forming. We returned from our visit to The\r\nHaven with the hope that one free end of this tangled skein was already\r\nin our hands.\n\nA week passed. The inquest had thrown no light upon the matter and\r\nhad been adjourned for further evidence. Stackhurst had made discreet\r\ninquiry about his subordinate, and there had been a superficial search\r\nof his room, but without result. Personally, I had gone over the whole\r\nground again, both physically and mentally, but with no new conclusions.\r\nIn all my chronicles the reader will find no case which brought me so\r\ncompletely to the limit of my powers. Even my imagination could conceive\r\nno solution to the mystery. And then there came the incident of the\r\ndog.\n\nIt was my old housekeeper who heard of it first by that strange\r\nwireless by which such people collect the news of the countryside.\n\n“Sad story this, sir, about Mr.\xa0McPherson’s dog,” said\r\nshe one evening.\n\nI do not encourage such conversations, but the words arrested my\r\nattention.\n\n“What of Mr.\xa0McPherson’s dog?”\n\n“Dead, sir. Died of grief for its master.”\n\n“Who told you this?”\n\n“Why, sir, everyone is talking of it. It took on terrible, and has\r\neaten nothing for a week. Then today two of the young gentlemen from The\r\nGables found it dead\ufeff—down on the beach, sir, at the very place where its\r\nmaster met his end.”\n\n“At the very place.” The words stood out clear in my memory. Some dim\r\nperception that the matter was vital rose in my mind. That the dog\r\nshould die was after the beautiful, faithful nature of dogs. But “in the\r\nvery place”! Why should this lonely beach be fatal to it? Was it\r\npossible that it also had been sacrificed to some revengeful feud? Was\r\nit possible\ufeff—? Yes, the perception was dim, but already something was\r\nbuilding up in my mind. In a few minutes I was on my way to The Gables,\r\nwhere I found Stackhurst in his study. At my request he sent for Sudbury\r\nand Blount, the two students who had found the dog.\n\n“Yes, it lay on the very edge of the pool,” said one of them. “It\r\nmust have followed the trail of its dead master.”\n\nI saw the faithful little creature, an Airedale terrier, laid out\r\nupon the mat in the hall. The body was stiff and rigid, the eyes\r\nprojecting, and the limbs contorted. There was agony in every line of\r\nit.\n\nFrom The Gables I walked down to the bathing-pool. The sun had sunk\r\nand the shadow of the great cliff lay black across the water, which\r\nglimmered dully like a sheet of lead. The place was deserted and there\r\nwas no sign of life save for two seabirds circling and screaming\r\noverhead. In the fading light I could dimly make out the little dog’s\r\nspoor upon the sand round the very rock on which his master’s towel had\r\nbeen laid. For a long time I stood in deep meditation while the shadows\r\ngrew darker around me. My mind was filled with racing thoughts. You have\r\nknown what it was to be in a nightmare in which you feel that there is\r\nsome all-important thing for which you search and which you know is\r\nthere, though it remains forever just beyond your reach. That was how I\r\nfelt that evening as I stood alone by that place of death. Then at last\r\nI turned and walked slowly homeward.\n\nI had just reached the top of the path when it came to me. Like a\r\nflash, I remembered the thing for which I had so eagerly and vainly\r\ngrasped. You will know, or Watson has written in vain, that I hold a\r\nvast store of out-of-the-way knowledge without scientific system, but\r\nvery available for the needs of my work. My mind is like a crowded\r\nbox-room with packets of all sorts stowed away therein\ufeff—so many that I\r\nmay well have but a vague perception of what was there. I had known that\r\nthere was something which might bear upon this matter. It was still\r\nvague, but at least I knew how I could make it clear. It was monstrous,\r\nincredible, and yet it was always a possibility. I would test it to the\r\nfull.\n\nThere is a great garret in my little house which is stuffed with\r\nbooks. It was into this that I plunged and rummaged for an hour. At the\r\nend of that time I emerged with a little chocolate and silver volume.\r\nEagerly I turned up the chapter of which I had a dim remembrance. Yes,\r\nit was indeed a farfetched and unlikely proposition, and yet I could not\r\nbe at rest until I had made sure if it might, indeed, be so. It was late\r\nwhen I retired, with my mind eagerly awaiting the work of the\r\nmorrow.\n\nBut that work met with an annoying interruption. I had hardly\r\nswallowed my early cup of tea and was starting for the beach when I had\r\na call from Inspector Bardle of the Sussex Constabulary\ufeff—a steady, solid,\r\nbovine man with thoughtful eyes, which looked at me now with a very\r\ntroubled expression.\n\n“I know your immense experience, sir,” said he. “This is quite\r\nunofficial, of course, and need go no farther. But I am fairly up\r\nagainst it in this McPherson case. The question is, shall I make an\r\narrest, or shall I not?”\n\n“Meaning Mr.\xa0Ian Murdoch?”\n\n“Yes, sir. There is really no one else when you come to think of it.\r\nThat’s the advantage of this solitude. We narrow it down to a very small\r\ncompass. If he did not do it, then who did?”\n\n“What have you against him?”\n\nHe had gleaned along the same furrows as I had. There was Murdoch’s\r\ncharacter and the mystery which seemed to hang round the man. His\r\nfurious bursts of temper, as shown in the incident of the dog. The fact\r\nthat he had quarrelled with McPherson in the past, and that there was\r\nsome reason to think that he might have resented his attentions to Miss\r\nBellamy. He had all my points, but no fresh ones, save that Murdoch\r\nseemed to be making every preparation for departure.\n\n“What would my position be if I let him slip away with all this\r\nevidence against him?” The burly, phlegmatic man was sorely troubled in\r\nhis mind.\n\n“Consider,” I said, “all the essential gaps in your case. On the\r\nmorning of the crime he can surely prove an alibi. He had been with his\r\nscholars till the last moment, and within a few minutes of McPherson’s\r\nappearance he came upon us from behind. Then bear in mind the absolute\r\nimpossibility that he could single-handed have inflicted this outrage\r\nupon a man quite as strong as himself. Finally, there is this question\r\nof the instrument with which these injuries were inflicted.”\n\n“What could it be but a scourge or flexible whip of some sort?”\n\n“Have you examined the marks?” I asked.\n\n“I have seen them. So has the doctor.”\n\n“But I have examined them very carefully with a lens. They have\r\npeculiarities.”\n\n“What are they, Mr.\xa0Holmes?”\n\nI stepped to my bureau and brought out an enlarged photograph. “This\r\nis my method in such cases,” I explained.\n\n“You certainly do things thoroughly, Mr.\xa0Holmes.”\n\n“I should hardly be what I am if I did not. Now let us consider this\r\nweal which extends round the right shoulder. Do you observe nothing\r\nremarkable?”\n\n“I can’t say I do.”\n\n“Surely it is evident that it is unequal in its intensity. There is a\r\ndot of extravasated blood here, and another there. There are similar\r\nindications in this other weal down here. What can that mean?”\n\n“I have no idea. Have you?”\n\n“Perhaps I have. Perhaps I haven’t. I may be able to say more soon.\r\nAnything which will define what made that mark will bring us a long way\r\ntowards the criminal.”\n\n“It is, of course, an absurd idea,” said the policeman, “but if a\r\nred-hot net of wire had been laid across the back, then these better\r\nmarked points would represent where the meshes crossed each other.”\n\n“A most ingenious comparison. Or shall we say a very stiff\r\ncat-o’-nine-tails with small hard knots upon it?”\n\n“By Jove, Mr.\xa0Holmes, I think you have hit it.”\n\n“Or there may be some very different cause, Mr.\xa0Bardle.\r\nBut your case is far too weak for an arrest. Besides, we have those last\r\nwords\ufeff—the ‘Lion’s Mane.’\u200a”\n\n“I have wondered whether Ian\ufeff—”\n\n“Yes, I have considered that. If the second word had borne any\r\nresemblance to Murdoch\ufeff—but it did not. He gave it almost in a shriek. I\r\nam sure that it was ‘Mane.’\u200a”\n\n“Have you no alternative, Mr.\xa0Holmes?”\n\n“Perhaps I have. But I do not care to discuss it until there is\r\nsomething more solid to discuss.”\n\n“And when will that be?”\n\n“In an hour\ufeff—possibly less.”\n\nThe inspector rubbed his chin and looked at me with dubious eyes.\n\n“I wish I could see what was in your mind, Mr.\xa0Holmes.\r\nPerhaps it’s those fishing-boats.”\n\n“No, no, they were too far out.”\n\n“Well, then, is it Bellamy and that big son of his? They were not too\r\nsweet upon Mr.\xa0McPherson. Could they have done him a\r\nmischief?”\n\n“No, no, you won’t draw me until I am ready,” said I with a smile.\r\n“Now, Inspector, we each have our own work to do. Perhaps if you were to\r\nmeet me here at midday\ufeff—”\n\nSo far we had got when there came the tremendous interruption which\r\nwas the beginning of the end.\n\nMy outer door was flung open, there were blundering footsteps in the\r\npassage, and Ian Murdoch staggered into the room, pallid, dishevelled,\r\nhis clothes in wild disorder, clawing with his bony hands at the\r\nfurniture to hold himself erect. “Brandy! Brandy!” he gasped, and fell\r\ngroaning upon the sofa.\n\nHe was not alone. Behind him came Stackhurst, hatless and panting,\r\nalmost as distrait as his companion.\n\n“Yes, yes, brandy!” he cried. “The man is at his last gasp. It was\r\nall I could do to bring him here. He fainted twice upon the way.”\n\nHalf a tumbler of the raw spirit brought about a wondrous change. He\r\npushed himself up on one arm and swung his coat from his shoulders. “For\r\nGod’s sake oil, opium, morphia!” he cried. “Anything to ease this\r\ninfernal agony!”\n\nThe inspector and I cried out at the sight. There, crisscrossed upon\r\nthe man’s naked shoulder, was the same strange reticulated pattern of\r\nred, inflamed lines which had been the death-mark of Fitzroy\r\nMcPherson.\n\nThe pain was evidently terrible and was more than local, for the\r\nsufferer’s breathing would stop for a time, his face would turn black,\r\nand then with loud gasps he would clap his hand to his heart, while his\r\nbrow dropped beads of sweat. At any moment he might die. More and more\r\nbrandy was poured down his throat, each fresh dose bringing him back to\r\nlife. Pads of cotton-wool soaked in salad-oil seemed to take the agony\r\nfrom the strange wounds. At last his head fell heavily upon the cushion.\r\nExhausted Nature had taken refuge in its last storehouse of vitality. It\r\nwas half a sleep and half a faint, but at least it was ease from\r\npain.\n\nTo question him had been impossible, but the moment we were assured\r\nof his condition Stackhurst turned upon me.\n\n“My God!” he cried, “what is it, Holmes? What is it?”\n\n“Where did you find him?”\n\n“Down on the beach. Exactly where poor McPherson met his end. If this\r\nman’s heart had been weak as McPherson’s was, he would not be here now.\r\nMore than once I thought he was gone as I brought him up. It was too far\r\nto The Gables, so I made for you.”\n\n“Did you see him on the beach?”\n\n“I was walking on the cliff when I heard his cry. He was at the edge\r\nof the water, reeling about like a drunken man. I ran down, threw some\r\nclothes about him, and brought him up. For heaven’s sake, Holmes, use\r\nall the powers you have and spare no pains to lift the curse from this\r\nplace, for life is becoming unendurable. Can you, with all your\r\nworldwide reputation, do nothing for us?”\n\n“I think I can, Stackhurst. Come with me now! And you, Inspector,\r\ncome along! We will see if we cannot deliver this murderer into your\r\nhands.”\n\nLeaving the unconscious man in the charge of my housekeeper, we all\r\nthree went down to the deadly lagoon. On the shingle there was piled a\r\nlittle heap of towels and clothes left by the stricken man. Slowly I\r\nwalked round the edge of the water, my comrades in Indian file behind\r\nme. Most of the pool was quite shallow, but under the cliff where the\r\nbeach was hollowed out it was four or five feet deep. It was to this\r\npart that a swimmer would naturally go, for it formed a beautiful\r\npellucid green pool as clear as crystal. A line of rocks lay above it at\r\nthe base of the cliff, and along this I led the way, peering eagerly\r\ninto the depths beneath me. I had reached the deepest and stillest pool\r\nwhen my eyes caught that for which they were searching, and I burst into\r\na shout of triumph.\n\n“Cyanea!” I cried. “Cyanea! Behold the Lion’s Mane!”\n\nThe strange object at which I pointed did indeed look like a tangled\r\nmass torn from the mane of a lion. It lay upon a rocky shelf some three\r\nfeet under the water, a curious waving, vibrating, hairy creature with\r\nstreaks of silver among its yellow tresses. It pulsated with a slow,\r\nheavy dilation and contraction.\n\n“It has done mischief enough. Its day is over!” I cried. “Help me,\r\nStackhurst! Let us end the murderer forever.”\n\nThere was a big boulder just above the ledge, and we pushed it until\r\nit fell with a tremendous splash into the water. When the ripples had\r\ncleared we saw that it had settled upon the ledge below. One flapping\r\nedge of yellow membrane showed that our victim was beneath it. A thick\r\noily scum oozed out from below the stone and stained the water round,\r\nrising slowly to the surface.\n\n“Well, this gets me!” cried the inspector. “What was it,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes? I’m born and bred in these parts, but I never\r\nsaw such a thing. It don’t belong to Sussex.”\n\n“Just as well for Sussex,” I remarked. “It may have been the\r\nsouthwest gale that brought it up. Come back to my house, both of you,\r\nand I will give you the terrible experience of one who has good reason\r\nto remember his own meeting with the same peril of the seas.”\n\nWhen we reached my study we found that Murdoch was so far recovered\r\nthat he could sit up. He was dazed in mind, and every now and then was\r\nshaken by a paroxysm of pain. In broken words he explained that he had\r\nno notion what had occurred to him, save that terrific pangs had\r\nsuddenly shot through him, and that it had taken all his fortitude to\r\nreach the bank.\n\n“Here is a book,” I said, taking up the little volume, “which first\r\nbrought light into what might have been forever dark. It is ‘Out of\r\nDoors’, by the famous observer, J. G. Wood. Wood himself very nearly\r\nperished from contact with this vile creature, so he wrote with a very\r\nfull knowledge. Cyanea capillata is the miscreant’s full name,\r\nand he can be as dangerous to life as, and far more painful than, the\r\nbite of the cobra. Let me briefly give this extract.\n\n“\u200a‘If the bather should see a loose roundish mass of tawny membranes\r\nand fibres, something like very large handfuls of lion’s mane and silver\r\npaper, let him beware, for this is the fearful stinger, Cyanea\r\ncapillata.’\n\n“Could our sinister acquaintance be more clearly described?\n\n“He goes on to tell of his own encounter with one when swimming off\r\nthe coast of Kent. He found that the creature radiated almost invisible\r\nfilaments to the distance of fifty feet, and that anyone within that\r\ncircumference from the deadly centre was in danger of death. Even at a\r\ndistance the effect upon Wood was almost fatal.\n\n“\u200a‘The multitudinous threads caused light scarlet lines upon the skin\r\nwhich on closer examination resolved into minute dots or pustules, each\r\ndot charged as it were with a red-hot needle making its way through the\r\nnerves.’\n\n“The local pain was, as he explains, the least part of the exquisite\r\ntorment.\n\n“\u200a‘Pangs shot through the chest, causing me to fall as if struck by a\r\nbullet. The pulsation would cease, and then the heart would give six or\r\nseven leaps as if it would force its way through the chest.’\n\n“It nearly killed him, although he had only been exposed to it in the\r\ndisturbed ocean and not in the narrow calm waters of a bathing-pool. He\r\nsays that he could hardly recognize himself afterwards, so white,\r\nwrinkled and shrivelled was his face. He gulped down brandy, a whole\r\nbottleful, and it seems to have saved his life. There is the book,\r\nInspector. I leave it with you, and you cannot doubt that it contains a\r\nfull explanation of the tragedy of poor McPherson.”\n\n“And incidentally exonerates me,” remarked Ian Murdoch with a wry\r\nsmile. “I do not blame you, Inspector, nor you, Mr.\xa0Holmes,\r\nfor your suspicions were natural. I feel that on the very eve of my\r\narrest I have only cleared myself by sharing the fate of my poor\r\nfriend.”\n\n“No, Mr.\xa0Murdoch. I was already upon the track, and had\r\nI been out as early as I intended I might well have saved you from this\r\nterrific experience.”\n\n“But how did you know, Mr.\xa0Holmes?”\n\n“I am an omnivorous reader with a strangely retentive memory for\r\ntrifles. That phrase ‘the Lion’s Mane’ haunted my mind. I knew that I\r\nhad seen it somewhere in an unexpected context. You have seen that it\r\ndoes describe the creature. I have no doubt that it was floating on the\r\nwater when McPherson saw it, and that this phrase was the only one by\r\nwhich he could convey to us a warning as to the creature which had been\r\nhis death.”\n\n“Then I, at least, am cleared,” said Murdoch, rising slowly to his\r\nfeet. “There are one or two words of explanation which I should give,\r\nfor I know the direction in which your inquiries have run. It is true\r\nthat I loved this lady, but from the day when she chose my friend\r\nMcPherson my one desire was to help her to happiness. I was well content\r\nto stand aside and act as their go-between. Often I carried their\r\nmessages, and it was because I was in their confidence and because she\r\nwas so dear to me that I hastened to tell her of my friend’s death, lest\r\nsomeone should forestall me in a more sudden and heartless manner. She\r\nwould not tell you, sir, of our relations lest you should disapprove and\r\nI might suffer. But with your leave I must try to get back to The\r\nGables, for my bed will be very welcome.”\n\nStackhurst held out his hand. “Our nerves have all been at\r\nconcert-pitch,” said he. “Forgive what is past, Murdoch. We shall\r\nunderstand each other better in the future.” They passed out together\r\nwith their arms linked in friendly fashion. The inspector remained,\r\nstaring at me in silence with his ox-like eyes.\n\n“Well, you’ve done it!” he cried at last. “I had read of you, but I\r\nnever believed it. It’s wonderful!”\n\nI was forced to shake my head. To accept such praise was to lower\r\none’s own standards.\n\n“I was slow at the outset\ufeff—culpably slow. Had the body been found in\r\nthe water I could hardly have missed it. It was the towel which misled\r\nme. The poor fellow had never thought to dry himself, and so I in turn\r\nwas led to believe that he had never been in the water. Why, then,\r\nshould the attack of any water creature suggest itself to me? That was\r\nwhere I went astray. Well, well, Inspector, I often ventured to chaff\r\nyou gentlemen of the police force, but Cyanea capillata very\r\nnearly avenged Scotland Yard.”\n\nThe Adventure of the Veiled Lodger\n\nWhen one considers that Mr.\xa0Sherlock Holmes was in\r\nactive practice for twenty-three years, and that during seventeen of\r\nthese I was allowed to cooperate with him and to keep notes of his\r\ndoings, it will be clear that I have a mass of material at my command.\r\nThe problem has always been not to find but to choose. There is the long\r\nrow of yearbooks which fill a shelf and there are the dispatch-cases\r\nfilled with documents, a perfect quarry for the student not only of\r\ncrime but of the social and official scandals of the late Victorian era.\r\nConcerning these latter, I may say that the writers of agonized letters,\r\nwho beg that the honour of their families or the reputation of famous\r\nforebears may not be touched, have nothing to fear. The discretion and\r\nhigh sense of professional honour which have always distinguished my\r\nfriend are still at work in the choice of these memoirs, and no\r\nconfidence will be abused. I deprecate, however, in the strongest way\r\nthe attempts which have been made lately to get at and to destroy these\r\npapers. The source of these outrages is known, and if they are repeated\r\nI have Mr.\xa0Holmes’s authority for saying that the whole\r\nstory concerning the politician, the lighthouse, and the trained\r\ncormorant will be given to the public. There is at least one reader who\r\nwill understand.\n\nIt is not reasonable to suppose that every one of these cases gave\r\nHolmes the opportunity of showing those curious gifts of instinct and\r\nobservation which I have endeavoured to set forth in these memoirs.\r\nSometimes he had with much effort to pick the fruit, sometimes it fell\r\neasily into his lap. But the most terrible human tragedies were often\r\ninvolved in those cases which brought him the fewest personal\r\nopportunities, and it is one of these which I now desire to record. In\r\ntelling it, I have made a slight change of name and place, but otherwise\r\nthe facts are as stated.\n\nOne forenoon\ufeff—it was late in 1896\ufeff—I received a hurried note from\r\nHolmes asking for my attendance. When I arrived I found him seated in a\r\nsmoke-laden atmosphere, with an elderly, motherly woman of the buxom\r\nlandlady type in the corresponding chair in front of him.\n\n“This is Mrs.\xa0Merrilow, of South Brixton,” said my\r\nfriend with a wave of the hand. “Mrs.\xa0Merrilow does not\r\nobject to tobacco, Watson, if you wish to indulge your filthy habits.\r\nMrs.\xa0Merrilow has an interesting story to tell which may\r\nwell lead to further developments in which your presence may be\r\nuseful.”\n\n“Anything I can do\ufeff—”\n\n“You will understand, Mrs.\xa0Merrilow, that if I come to\r\nMrs.\xa0Ronder I should prefer to have a witness. You will\r\nmake her understand that before we arrive.”\n\n“Lord bless you, Mr.\xa0Holmes,” said our visitor, “she is\r\nthat anxious to see you that you might bring the whole parish at your\r\nheels!”\n\n“Then we shall come early in the afternoon. Let us see that we have\r\nour facts correct before we start. If we go over them it will help\r\nDr.\xa0Watson to understand the situation. You say that\r\nMrs.\xa0Ronder has been your lodger for seven years and that\r\nyou have only once seen her face.”\n\n“And I wish to God I had not!” said Mrs.\xa0Merrilow.\n\n“It was, I understand, terribly mutilated.”\n\n“Well, Mr.\xa0Holmes, you would hardly say it was a face at\r\nall. That’s how it looked. Our milkman got a glimpse of her once peeping\r\nout of the upper window, and he dropped his tin and the milk all over\r\nthe front garden. That is the kind of face it is. When I saw her\ufeff—I\r\nhappened on her unawares\ufeff—she covered up quick, and then she said, ‘Now,\r\nMrs.\xa0Merrilow, you know at last why it is that I never\r\nraise my veil.’\u200a”\n\n“Do you know anything about her history?”\n\n“Nothing at all.”\n\n“Did she give references when she came?”\n\n“No, sir, but she gave hard cash, and plenty of it. A quarter’s rent\r\nright down on the table in advance and no arguing about terms. In these\r\ntimes a poor woman like me can’t afford to turn down a chance like\r\nthat.”\n\n“Did she give any reason for choosing your house?”\n\n“Mine stands well back from the road and is more private than most.\r\nThen, again, I only take the one, and I have no family of my own. I\r\nreckon she had tried others and found that mine suited her best. It’s\r\nprivacy she is after, and she is ready to pay for it.”\n\n“You say that she never showed her face from first to last save on\r\nthe one accidental occasion. Well, it is a very remarkable story, most\r\nremarkable, and I don’t wonder that you want it examined.”\n\n“I don’t, Mr.\xa0Holmes. I am quite satisfied so long as I\r\nget my rent. You could not have a quieter lodger, or one who gives less\r\ntrouble.”\n\n“Then what has brought matters to a head?”\n\n“Her health, Mr.\xa0Holmes. She seems to be wasting away.\r\nAnd there’s something terrible on her mind. ‘Murder!’ she cries.\r\n‘Murder!’ And once I heard her: ‘You cruel beast! You monster!’ she\r\ncried. It was in the night, and it fair rang through the house and sent\r\nthe shivers through me. So I went to her in the morning.\r\n‘Mrs.\xa0Ronder,’ I says, ‘if you have anything that is\r\ntroubling your soul, there’s the clergy,’ I says, ‘and there’s the\r\npolice. Between them you should get some help.’ ‘For God’s sake, not the\r\npolice!’ says she, ‘and the clergy can’t change what is past. And yet,’\r\nshe says, ‘it would ease my mind if someone knew the truth before I\r\ndied.’ ‘Well,’ says I, ‘if you won’t have the regulars, there is this\r\ndetective man what we read about’\ufeff—beggin’ your pardon,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes. And she, she fair jumped at it. ‘That’s the\r\nman,’ says she. ‘I wonder I never thought of it before. Bring him here,\r\nMrs.\xa0Merrilow, and if he won’t come, tell him I am the wife\r\nof Ronder’s wild beast show. Say that, and give him the name Abbas\r\nParva. Here it is as she wrote it, Abbas Parva. ‘That will bring him if\r\nhe’s the man I think he is.’\u200a”\n\n“And it will, too,” remarked Holmes. “Very good,\r\nMrs.\xa0Merrilow. I should like to have a little chat with\r\nDr.\xa0Watson. That will carry us till lunchtime. About three\r\no’clock you may expect to see us at your house in Brixton.”\n\nOur visitor had no sooner waddled out of the room\ufeff—no other verb can\r\ndescribe Mrs.\xa0Merrilow’s method of progression\ufeff—than\r\nSherlock Holmes threw himself with fierce energy upon the pile of\r\ncommonplace books in the corner. For a few minutes there was a constant\r\nswish of the leaves, and then with a grunt of satisfaction he came upon\r\nwhat he sought. So excited was he that he did not rise, but sat upon the\r\nfloor like some strange Buddha, with crossed legs, the huge books all\r\nround him, and one open upon his knees.\n\n“The case worried me at the time, Watson. Here are my marginal notes\r\nto prove it. I confess that I could make nothing of it. And yet I was\r\nconvinced that the coroner was wrong. Have you no recollection of the\r\nAbbas Parva tragedy?”\n\n“None, Holmes.”\n\n“And yet you were with me then. But certainly my own impression was\r\nvery superficial. For there was nothing to go by, and none of the\r\nparties had engaged my services. Perhaps you would care to read the\r\npapers?”\n\n“Could you not give me the points?”\n\n“That is very easily done. It will probably come back to your memory\r\nas I talk. Ronder, of course, was a household word. He was the rival of\r\nWombwell, and of Sanger, one of the greatest showmen of his day. There\r\nis evidence, however, that he took to drink, and that both he and his\r\nshow were on the down grade at the time of the great tragedy. The\r\ncaravan had halted for the night at Abbas Parva, which is a small\r\nvillage in Berkshire, when this horror occurred. They were on their way\r\nto Wimbledon, travelling by road, and they were simply camping and not\r\nexhibiting, as the place is so small a one that it would not have paid\r\nthem to open.\n\n“They had among their exhibits a very fine North African lion. Sahara\r\nKing was its name, and it was the habit, both of Ronder and his wife, to\r\ngive exhibitions inside its cage. Here, you see, is a photograph of the\r\nperformance by which you will perceive that Ronder was a huge porcine\r\nperson and that his wife was a very magnificent woman. It was deposed at\r\nthe inquest that there had been some signs that the lion was dangerous,\r\nbut, as usual, familiarity begat contempt, and no notice was taken of\r\nthe fact.\n\n“It was usual for either Ronder or his wife to feed the lion at\r\nnight. Sometimes one went, sometimes both, but they never allowed anyone\r\nelse to do it, for they believed that so long as they were the\r\nfood-carriers he would regard them as benefactors and would never molest\r\nthem. On this particular night, seven years ago, they both went, and a\r\nvery terrible happening followed, the details of which have never been\r\nmade clear.\n\n“It seems that the whole camp was roused near midnight by the roars\r\nof the animal and the screams of the woman. The different grooms and\r\nemployees rushed from their tents, carrying lanterns, and by their light\r\nan awful sight was revealed. Ronder lay, with the back of his head\r\ncrushed in and deep claw-marks across his scalp, some ten yards from the\r\ncage, which was open. Close to the door of the cage lay\r\nMrs.\xa0Ronder upon her back, with the creature squatting and\r\nsnarling above her. It had torn her face in such a fashion that it was\r\nnever thought that she could live. Several of the circus men, headed by\r\nLeonardo, the strong man, and Griggs, the clown, drove the creature off\r\nwith poles, upon which it sprang back into the cage and was at once\r\nlocked in. How it had got loose was a mystery. It was conjectured that\r\nthe pair intended to enter the cage, but that when the door was loosed\r\nthe creature bounded out upon them. There was no other point of interest\r\nin the evidence save that the woman in a delirium of agony kept\r\nscreaming, ‘Coward! Coward!’ as she was carried back to the van in which\r\nthey lived. It was six months before she was fit to give evidence, but\r\nthe inquest was duly held, with the obvious verdict of death from\r\nmisadventure.”\n\n“What alternative could be conceived?” said I.\n\n“You may well say so. And yet there were one or two points which\r\nworried young Edmunds, of the Berkshire Constabulary. A smart lad that!\r\nHe was sent later to Allahabad. That was how I came into the matter, for\r\nhe dropped in and smoked a pipe or two over it.”\n\n“A thin, yellow-haired man?”\n\n“Exactly. I was sure you would pick up the trail presently.”\n\n“But what worried him?”\n\n“Well, we were both worried. It was so deucedly difficult to\r\nreconstruct the affair. Look at it from the lion’s point of view. He is\r\nliberated. What does he do? He takes half a dozen bounds forward, which\r\nbrings him to Ronder. Ronder turns to fly\ufeff—the claw-marks were on the\r\nback of his head\ufeff—but the lion strikes him down. Then, instead of\r\nbounding on and escaping, he returns to the woman, who was close to the\r\ncage, and he knocks her over and chews her face up. Then, again, those\r\ncries of hers would seem to imply that her husband had in some way\r\nfailed her. What could the poor devil have done to help her? You see the\r\ndifficulty?”\n\n“Quite.”\n\n“And then there was another thing. It comes back to me now as I think\r\nit over. There was some evidence that just at the time the lion roared\r\nand the woman screamed, a man began shouting in terror.”\n\n“This man Ronder, no doubt.”\n\n“Well, if his skull was smashed in you would hardly expect to hear\r\nfrom him again. There were at least two witnesses who spoke of the cries\r\nof a man being mingled with those of a woman.”\n\n“I should think the whole camp was crying out by then. As to the\r\nother points, I think I could suggest a solution.”\n\n“I should be glad to consider it.”\n\n“The two were together, ten yards from the cage, when the lion got\r\nloose. The man turned and was struck down. The woman conceived the idea\r\nof getting into the cage and shutting the door. It was her only refuge.\r\nShe made for it, and just as she reached it the beast bounded after her\r\nand knocked her over. She was angry with her husband for having\r\nencouraged the beast’s rage by turning. If they had faced it they might\r\nhave cowed it. Hence her cries of ‘Coward!’\u200a”\n\n“Brilliant, Watson! Only one flaw in your diamond.”\n\n“What is the flaw, Holmes?”\n\n“If they were both ten paces from the cage, how came the beast to get\r\nloose?”\n\n“Is it possible that they had some enemy who loosed it?”\n\n“And why should it attack them savagely when it was in the habit of\r\nplaying with them, and doing tricks with them inside the cage?”\n\n“Possibly the same enemy had done something to enrage it.”\n\nHolmes looked thoughtful and remained in silence for some\r\nmoments.\n\n“Well, Watson, there is this to be said for your theory. Ronder was a\r\nman of many enemies. Edmunds told me that in his cups he was horrible. A\r\nhuge bully of a man, he cursed and slashed at everyone who came in his\r\nway. I expect those cries about a monster, of which our visitor has\r\nspoken, were nocturnal reminiscences of the dear departed. However, our\r\nspeculations are futile until we have all the facts. There is a cold\r\npartridge on the sideboard, Watson, and a bottle of Montrachet. Let us\r\nrenew our energies before we make a fresh call upon them.”\n\nWhen our hansom deposited us at the house of\r\nMrs.\xa0Merrilow, we found that plump lady blocking up the\r\nopen door of her humble but retired abode. It was very clear that her\r\nchief preoccupation was lest she should lose a valuable lodger, and she\r\nimplored us, before showing us up, to say and do nothing which could\r\nlead to so undesirable an end. Then, having reassured her, we followed\r\nher up the straight, badly carpeted staircase and were shown into the\r\nroom of the mysterious lodger.\n\nIt was a close, musty, ill-ventilated place, as might be expected,\r\nsince its inmate seldom left it. From keeping beasts in a cage, the\r\nwoman seemed, by some retribution of fate, to have become herself a\r\nbeast in a cage. She sat now in a broken armchair in the shadowy corner\r\nof the room. Long years of inaction had coarsened the lines of her\r\nfigure, but at some period it must have been beautiful, and was still\r\nfull and voluptuous. A thick dark veil covered her face, but it was cut\r\noff close at her upper lip and disclosed a perfectly shaped mouth and a\r\ndelicately rounded chin. I could well conceive that she had indeed been\r\na very remarkable woman. Her voice, too, was well modulated and\r\npleasing.\n\n“My name is not unfamiliar to you, Mr.\xa0Holmes,” said\r\nshe. “I thought that it would bring you.”\n\n“That is so, madam, though I do not know how you are aware that I was\r\ninterested in your case.”\n\n“I learned it when I had recovered my health and was examined by\r\nMr.\xa0Edmunds, the county detective. I fear I lied to him.\r\nPerhaps it would have been wiser had I told the truth.”\n\n“It is usually wiser to tell the truth. But why did you lie to\r\nhim?”\n\n“Because the fate of someone else depended upon it. I know that he\r\nwas a very worthless being, and yet I would not have his destruction\r\nupon my conscience. We had been so close\ufeff—so close!”\n\n“But has this impediment been removed?”\n\n“Yes, sir. The person that I allude to is dead.”\n\n“Then why should you not now tell the police anything you know?”\n\n“Because there is another person to be considered. That other person\r\nis myself. I could not stand the scandal and publicity which would come\r\nfrom a police examination. I have not long to live, but I wish to die\r\nundisturbed. And yet I wanted to find one man of judgment to whom I\r\ncould tell my terrible story, so that when I am gone all might be\r\nunderstood.”\n\n“You compliment me, madam. At the same time, I am a responsible\r\nperson. I do not promise you that when you have spoken I may not myself\r\nthink it my duty to refer the case to the police.”\n\n“I think not, Mr.\xa0Holmes. I know your character and\r\nmethods too well, for I have followed your work for some years. Reading\r\nis the only pleasure which fate has left me, and I miss little which\r\npasses in the world. But in any case, I will take my chance of the use\r\nwhich you may make of my tragedy. It will ease my mind to tell it.”\n\n“My friend and I would be glad to hear it.”\n\nThe woman rose and took from a drawer the photograph of a man. He was\r\nclearly a professional acrobat, a man of magnificent physique, taken\r\nwith his huge arms folded across his swollen chest and a smile breaking\r\nfrom under his heavy moustache\ufeff—the self-satisfied smile of the man of\r\nmany conquests.\n\n“That is Leonardo,” she said.\n\n“Leonardo, the strong man, who gave evidence?”\n\n“The same. And this\ufeff—this is my husband.”\n\nIt was a dreadful face\ufeff—a human pig, or rather a human wild boar, for\r\nit was formidable in its bestiality. One could imagine that vile mouth\r\nchamping and foaming in its rage, and one could conceive those small,\r\nvicious eyes darting pure malignancy as they looked forth upon the\r\nworld. Ruffian, bully, beast\ufeff—it was all written on that heavy-jowled\r\nface.\n\n“Those two pictures will help you, gentlemen, to understand the\r\nstory. I was a poor circus girl brought up on the sawdust, and doing\r\nsprings through the hoop before I was ten. When I became a woman this\r\nman loved me, if such lust as his can be called love, and in an evil\r\nmoment I became his wife. From that day I was in hell, and he the devil\r\nwho tormented me. There was no one in the show who did not know of his\r\ntreatment. He deserted me for others. He tied me down and lashed me with\r\nhis ridingwhip when I complained. They all pitied me and they all\r\nloathed him, but what could they do? They feared him, one and all. For\r\nhe was terrible at all times, and murderous when he was drunk. Again and\r\nagain he was had up for assault, and for cruelty to the beasts, but he\r\nhad plenty of money and the fines were nothing to him. The best men all\r\nleft us, and the show began to go downhill. It was only Leonardo and I\r\nwho kept it up\ufeff—with little Jimmy Griggs, the clown. Poor devil, he had\r\nnot much to be funny about, but he did what he could to hold things\r\ntogether.\n\n“Then Leonardo came more and more into my life. You see what he was\r\nlike. I know now the poor spirit that was hidden in that splendid body,\r\nbut compared to my husband he seemed like the angel Gabriel. He pitied\r\nme and helped me, till at last our intimacy turned to love\ufeff—deep, deep,\r\npassionate love, such love as I had dreamed of but never hoped to feel.\r\nMy husband suspected it, but I think that he was a coward as well as a\r\nbully, and that Leonardo was the one man that he was afraid of. He took\r\nrevenge in his own way by torturing me more than ever. One night my\r\ncries brought Leonardo to the door of our van. We were near tragedy that\r\nnight, and soon my lover and I understood that it could not be avoided.\r\nMy husband was not fit to live. We planned that he should die.\n\n“Leonardo had a clever, scheming brain. It was he who planned it. I\r\ndo not say that to blame him, for I was ready to go with him every inch\r\nof the way. But I should never have had the wit to think of such a plan.\r\nWe made a club\ufeff—Leonardo made it\ufeff—and in the leaden head he fastened five\r\nlong steel nails, the points outward, with just such a spread as the\r\nlion’s paw. This was to give my husband his deathblow, and yet to leave\r\nthe evidence that it was the lion which we would loose who had done the\r\ndeed.\n\n“It was a pitch-dark night when my husband and I went down, as was\r\nour custom, to feed the beast. We carried with us the raw meat in a zinc\r\npail. Leonardo was waiting at the corner of the big van which we should\r\nhave to pass before we reached the cage. He was too slow, and we walked\r\npast him before he could strike, but he followed us on tiptoe and I\r\nheard the crash as the club smashed my husband’s skull. My heart leaped\r\nwith joy at the sound. I sprang forward, and I undid the catch which\r\nheld the door of the great lion’s cage.\n\n“And then the terrible thing happened. You may have heard how quick\r\nthese creatures are to scent human blood, and how it excites them. Some\r\nstrange instinct had told the creature in one instant that a human being\r\nhad been slain. As I slipped the bars it bounded out and was on me in an\r\ninstant. Leonardo could have saved me. If he had rushed forward and\r\nstruck the beast with his club he might have cowed it. But the man lost\r\nhis nerve. I heard him shout in his terror, and then I saw him turn and\r\nfly. At the same instant the teeth of the lion met in my face. Its hot,\r\nfilthy breath had already poisoned me and I was hardly conscious of\r\npain. With the palms of my hands I tried to push the great steaming,\r\nbloodstained jaws away from me, and I screamed for help. I was conscious\r\nthat the camp was stirring, and then dimly I remembered a group of men.\r\nLeonardo, Griggs, and others, dragging me from under the creature’s\r\npaws. That was my last memory, Mr.\xa0Holmes, for many a weary\r\nmonth. When I came to myself and saw myself in the mirror, I cursed that\r\nlion\ufeff—oh, how I cursed him!\ufeff—not because he had torn away my beauty but\r\nbecause he had not torn away my life. I had but one desire,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes, and I had enough money to gratify it. It was\r\nthat I should cover myself so that my poor face should be seen by none,\r\nand that I should dwell where none whom I had ever known should find me.\r\nThat was all that was left to me to do\ufeff—and that is what I have done. A\r\npoor wounded beast that has crawled into its hole to die\ufeff—that is the end\r\nof Eugenia Ronder.”\n\nWe sat in silence for some time after the unhappy woman had told her\r\nstory. Then Holmes stretched out his long arm and patted her hand with\r\nsuch a show of sympathy as I had seldom known him to exhibit.\n\n“Poor girl!” he said. “Poor girl! The ways of fate are indeed hard to\r\nunderstand. If there is not some compensation hereafter, then the world\r\nis a cruel jest. But what of this man Leonardo?”\n\n“I never saw him or heard from him again. Perhaps I have been wrong\r\nto feel so bitterly against him. He might as soon have loved one of the\r\nfreaks whom we carried round the country as the thing which the lion had\r\nleft. But a woman’s love is not so easily set aside. He had left me\r\nunder the beast’s claws, he had deserted me in my need, and yet I could\r\nnot bring myself to give him to the gallows. For myself, I cared nothing\r\nwhat became of me. What could be more dreadful than my actual life? But\r\nI stood between Leonardo and his fate.”\n\n“And he is dead?”\n\n“He was drowned last month when bathing near Margate. I saw his death\r\nin the paper.”\n\n“And what did he do with this five-clawed club, which is the most\r\nsingular and ingenious part of all your story?”\n\n“I cannot tell, Mr.\xa0Holmes. There is a chalk-pit by the\r\ncamp, with a deep green pool at the base of it. Perhaps in the depths of\r\nthat pool\ufeff—”\n\n“Well, well, it is of little consequence now. The case is\r\nclosed.”\n\n“Yes,” said the woman, “the case is closed.”\n\nWe had risen to go, but there was something in the woman’s voice\r\nwhich arrested Holmes’s attention. He turned swiftly upon her.\n\n“Your life is not your own,” he said. “Keep your hands off it.”\n\n“What use is it to anyone?”\n\n“How can you tell? The example of patient suffering is in itself the\r\nmost precious of all lessons to an impatient world.”\n\nThe woman’s answer was a terrible one. She raised her veil and\r\nstepped forward into the light.\n\n“I wonder if you would bear it,” she said.\n\nIt was horrible. No words can describe the framework of a face when\r\nthe face itself is gone. Two living and beautiful brown eyes looking\r\nsadly out from that grisly ruin did but make the view more awful. Holmes\r\nheld up his hand in a gesture of pity and protest, and together we left\r\nthe room.\n\nTwo days later, when I called upon my friend, he pointed with some\r\npride to a small blue bottle upon his mantelpiece. I picked it up. There\r\nwas a red poison label. A pleasant almondy odour rose when I opened\r\nit.\n\n“Prussic acid?” said I.\n\n“Exactly. It came by post. ‘I send you my temptation. I will follow\r\nyour advice.’ That was the message. I think, Watson, we can guess the\r\nname of the brave woman who sent it.”\n\nThe Adventure of the Shoscombe Old Place\n\nSherlock Holmes had been bending for a long time over a low-power\r\nmicroscope. Now he straightened himself up and looked round at me in\r\ntriumph.\n\n“It is glue, Watson,” said he. “Unquestionably it is glue. Have a\r\nlook at these scattered objects in the field!”\n\nI stooped to the eyepiece and focused for my vision.\n\n“Those hairs are threads from a tweed coat. The irregular gray masses\r\nare dust. There are epithelial scales on the left. Those brown blobs in\r\nthe centre are undoubtedly glue.”\n\n“Well,” I said, laughing, “I am prepared to take your word for it.\r\nDoes anything depend upon it?”\n\n“It is a very fine demonstration,” he answered. “In the\r\nSt.\xa0Pancras case you may remember that a cap was found\r\nbeside the dead policeman. The accused man denies that it is his. But he\r\nis a picture-frame maker who habitually handles glue.”\n\n“Is it one of your cases?”\n\n“No; my friend, Merivale, of the Yard, asked me to look into the\r\ncase. Since I ran down that coiner by the zinc and copper filings in the\r\nseam of his cuff they have begun to realize the importance of the\r\nmicroscope.” He looked impatiently at his watch. “I had a new client\r\ncalling, but he is overdue. By the way, Watson, you know something of\r\nracing?”\n\n“I ought to. I pay for it with about half my wound pension.”\n\n“Then I’ll make you my ‘Handy Guide to the Turf.’ What about Sir\r\nRobert Norberton? Does the name recall anything?”\n\n“Well, I should say so. He lives at Shoscombe Old Place, and I know\r\nit well, for my summer quarters were down there once. Norberton nearly\r\ncame within your province once.”\n\n“How was that?”\n\n“It was when he horsewhipped Sam Brewer, the well-known Curzon Street\r\nmoneylender, on Newmarket Heath. He nearly killed the man.”\n\n“Ah, he sounds interesting! Does he often indulge in that way?”\n\n“Well, he has the name of being a dangerous man. He is about the most\r\ndaredevil rider in England\ufeff—second in the Grand National a few years\r\nback. He is one of those men who have overshot their true generation. He\r\nshould have been a buck in the days of the Regency\ufeff—a boxer, an athlete,\r\na plunger on the turf, a lover of fair ladies, and, by all account, so\r\nfar down Queer Street that he may never find his way back again.”\n\n“Capital, Watson! A thumbnail sketch. I seem to know the man. Now,\r\ncan you give me some idea of Shoscombe Old Place?”\n\n“Only that it is in the centre of Shoscombe Park, and that the famous\r\nShoscombe stud and training quarters are to be found there.”\n\n“And the head trainer,” said Holmes, “is John Mason. You need not\r\nlook surprised at my knowledge, Watson, for this is a letter from him\r\nwhich I am unfolding. But let us have some more about Shoscombe. I seem\r\nto have struck a rich vein.”\n\n“There are the Shoscombe spaniels,” said I. “You hear of them at\r\nevery dog show. The most exclusive breed in England. They are the\r\nspecial pride of the lady of Shoscombe Old Place.”\n\n“Sir Robert Norberton’s wife, I presume!”\n\n“Sir Robert has never married. Just as well, I think, considering his\r\nprospects. He lives with his widowed sister, Lady Beatrice Falder.”\n\n“You mean that she lives with him?”\n\n“No, no. The place belonged to her late husband, Sir James. Norberton\r\nhas no claim on it at all. It is only a life interest and reverts to her\r\nhusband’s brother. Meantime, she draws the rents every year.”\n\n“And brother Robert, I suppose, spends the said rents?”\n\n“That is about the size of it. He is a devil of a fellow and must\r\nlead her a most uneasy life. Yet I have heard that she is devoted to\r\nhim. But what is amiss at Shoscombe?”\n\n“Ah, that is just what I want to know. And here, I expect, is the man\r\nwho can tell us.”\n\nThe door had opened and the page had shown in a tall, clean-shaven\r\nman with the firm, austere expression which is only seen upon those who\r\nhave to control horses or boys. Mr.\xa0John Mason had many of\r\nboth under his sway, and he looked equal to the task. He bowed with cold\r\nself-possession and seated himself upon the chair to which Holmes had\r\nwaved him.\n\n“You had my note, Mr.\xa0Holmes?”\n\n“Yes, but it explained nothing.”\n\n“It was too delicate a thing for me to put the details on paper. And\r\ntoo complicated. It was only face to face I could do it.”\n\n“Well, we are at your disposal.”\n\n“First of all, Mr.\xa0Holmes, I think that my employer, Sir\r\nRobert, has gone mad.”\n\nHolmes raised his eyebrows. “This is Baker Street, not Harley\r\nStreet,” said he. “But why do you say so?”\n\n“Well, sir, when a man does one queer thing, or two queer things,\r\nthere may be a meaning to it, but when everything he does is queer, then\r\nyou begin to wonder. I believe Shoscombe Prince and the Derby have\r\nturned his brain.”\n\n“That is a colt you are running?”\n\n“The best in England, Mr.\xa0Holmes. I should know, if\r\nanyone does. Now, I’ll be plain with you, for I know you are gentlemen\r\nof honour and that it won’t go beyond the room. Sir Robert has got to\r\nwin this Derby. He’s up to the neck, and it’s his last chance.\r\nEverything he could raise or borrow is on the horse\ufeff—and at fine odds,\r\ntoo! You can get forties now, but it was nearer the hundred when he\r\nbegan to back him.”\n\n“But how is that if the horse is so good?”\n\n“The public don’t know how good he is. Sir Robert has been too clever\r\nfor the touts. He has the Prince’s half-brother out for spins. You can’t\r\ntell ’em apart. But there are two lengths in a furlong between them when\r\nit comes to a gallop. He thinks of nothing but the horse and the race.\r\nHis whole life is on it. He’s holding off the Jews till then. If the\r\nPrince fails him he is done.”\n\n“It seems a rather desperate gamble, but where does the madness come\r\nin?”\n\n“Well, first of all, you have only to look at him. I don’t believe he\r\nsleeps at night. He is down at the stables at all hours. His eyes are\r\nwild. It has all been too much for his nerves. Then there is his conduct\r\nto Lady Beatrice!”\n\n“Ah! What is that?”\n\n“They have always been the best of friends. They had the same tastes,\r\nthe two of them, and she loved the horses as much as he did. Every day\r\nat the same hour she would drive down to see them\ufeff—and, above all, she\r\nloved the Prince. He would prick up his ears when he heard the wheels on\r\nthe gravel, and he would trot out each morning to the carriage to get\r\nhis lump of sugar. But that’s all over now.”\n\n“Why?”\n\n“Well, she seems to have lost all interest in the horses. For a week\r\nnow she has driven past the stables with never so much as ‘Good\r\nmorning’!”\n\n“You think there has been a quarrel?”\n\n“And a bitter, savage, spitelful quarrel at that. Why else would he\r\ngive away her pet spaniel that she loved as if he were her child? He\r\ngave it a few days ago to old Barnes, what keeps the Green Dragon, three\r\nmiles off, at Crendall.”\n\n“That certainly did seem strange.”\n\n“Of course, with her weak heart and dropsy one couldn’t expect that\r\nshe could get about with him, but he spent two hours every evening in\r\nher room. He might well do what he could, for she has been a rare good\r\nfriend to him. But that’s all over, too. He never goes near her. And she\r\ntakes it to heart. She is brooding and sulky and drinking,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes\ufeff—drinking like a fish.”\n\n“Did she drink before this estrangement?”\n\n“Well, she took her glass, but now it is often a whole bottle of an\r\nevening. So Stephens, the butler, told me. It’s all changed,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes, and there is something damned rotten about it.\r\nBut then, again, what is master doing down at the old church crypt at\r\nnight? And who is the man that meets him there?”\n\nHolmes rubbed his hands.\n\n“Go on, Mr.\xa0Mason. You get more and more\r\ninteresting.”\n\n“It was the butler who saw him go. Twelve o’clock at night and\r\nraining hard. So next night I was up at the house and, sure enough,\r\nmaster was off again. Stephens and I went after him, but it was jumpy\r\nwork, for it would have been a bad job if he had seen us. He’s a\r\nterrible man with his fists if he gets started, and no respecter of\r\npersons. So we were shy of getting too near, but we marked him down all\r\nlight. It was the haunted crypt that he was making for, and there was a\r\nman waiting for him there.”\n\n“What is this haunted cryp?”\n\n“Well, sir, there is an old ruined chapel in the park. It is so old\r\nthat nobody could fix its date. And under it there’s a crypt which has a\r\nbad name among us. It’s a dark, damp, lonely place by day, but there are\r\nfew in that county that would have the nerve to go near it at night. But\r\nmaster’s not afraid. He never feared anything in his life. But what is\r\nhe doing there in the nighttime?”\n\n“Wait a bit!” said Holmes. “You say there is another man there. It\r\nmust be one of your own stablemen, or someone from the house! Surely you\r\nhave only to spot who it is and question him?”\n\n“It’s no one I know.”\n\n“How can you say that?”\n\n“Because I have seen him, Mr.\xa0Holmes. It was on that\r\nsecond night. Sir Robert turned and passed us\ufeff—me and Stephens, quaking\r\nin the bushes like two bunny-rabbits, for there was a bit of moon that\r\nnight. But we could hear the other moving about behind. We were not\r\nafraid of him. So we up when Sir Robert was gone and pretended we were\r\njust having a walk like in the moonlight, and so we came right on him as\r\ncasual and innocent as you please. ‘Hullo, mate! who may you be?’ says\r\nI. I guess he had not heard us coming, so he looked over his shoulder\r\nwith a face as if he had seen the devil coming out of hell. He let out a\r\nyell, and away he went as hard as he could lick it in the darkness. He\r\ncould run!\ufeff—I’ll give him that. In a minute he was out of sight and\r\nhearing, and who he was, or what he was, we never found.”\n\n“But you saw him clearly in the moonlight?”\n\n“Yes, I would swear to his yellow face\ufeff—a mean dog, I should say. What\r\ncould he have in common with Sir Robert?”\n\nHolmes sat for some time lost in thought.\n\n“Who keeps Lady Beatrice Falder company?” he asked at last.\n\n“There is her maid, Carrie Evans. She has been with her this five\r\nyears.”\n\n“And is, no doubt, devoted?”\n\nMr.\xa0Mason shuffled uncomfortably.\n\n“She’s devoted enough,” he answered at last. “But I won’t say to\r\nwhom.”\n\n“Ah!” said Holmes.\n\n“I can’t tell tales out of school.”\n\n“I quite understand, Mr.\xa0Mason. Of course, the situation\r\nis clear enough. From Dr.\xa0Watson’s description of Sir\r\nRobert I can realize that no woman is safe from him. Don’t you think the\r\nquarrel between brother and sister may lie there?”\n\n“Well, the scandal has been pretty clear for a long time.”\n\n“But she may not have seen it before. Let us suppose that she has\r\nsuddenly found it out. She wants to get rid of the woman. Her brother\r\nwill not permit it. The invalid, with her weak heart and inability to\r\nget about, has no means of enforcing her will. The hated maid is still\r\ntied to her. The lady refuses to speak, sulks, takes to drink. Sir\r\nRobert in his anger takes her pet spaniel away from her. Does not all\r\nthis hang together?”\n\n“Well, it might do\ufeff—so far as it goes.”\n\n“Exactly! As far as it goes. How would all that bear upon the visits\r\nby night to the old crypt? We can’t fit that into our plot.”\n\n“No, sir, and there is something more that I can’t fit in. Why should\r\nSir Robert want to dig up a dead body?”\n\nHolmes sat up abruptly.\n\n“We only found it out yesterday\ufeff—after I had written to you. Yesterday\r\nSir Robert had gone to London, so Stephens and I went down to the crypt.\r\nIt was all in order, sir, except that in one corner was a bit of a human\r\nbody.”\n\n“You informed the police, I suppose?”\n\nOur visitor smiled grimly.\n\n“Well, sir, I think it would hardly interest them. It was just the\r\nhead and a few bones of a mummy. It may have been a thousand years old.\r\nBut it wasn’t there before. That I’ll swear, and so will Stephens. It\r\nhad been stowed away in a corner and covered over with a board, but that\r\ncorner had always been empty before.”\n\n“What did you do with it?”\n\n“Well, we just left it there.”\n\n“That was wise. You say Sir Robert was away yesterday. Has he\r\nreturned?”\n\n“We expect him back today.”\n\n“When did Sir Robert give away his sister’s dog?”\n\n“It was just a week ago today. The creature was howling outside the\r\nold well-house, and Sir Robert was in one of his tantrums that morning.\r\nHe caught it up, and I thought he would have killed it. Then he gave it\r\nto Sandy Bain, the jockey, and told him to take the dog to old Barnes at\r\nthe Green Dragon, for he never wished to see it again.”\n\nHolmes sat for some time in silent thought. He had lit the oldest and\r\nfoulest of his pipes.\n\n“I am not clear yet what you want me to do in this matter,\r\nMr.\xa0Mason,” he said at last. “Can’t you make it more\r\ndefinite?”\n\n“Perhaps this will make it more definite, Mr.\xa0Holmes,”\r\nsaid our visltor.\n\nHe took a paper from his pocket, and, unwrapping it carefully, he\r\nexposed a charred fragment of bone.\n\nHolmes examined it with interest.\n\n“Where did you get it?”\n\n“There is a central heating furnace in the cellar under Lady\r\nBeatrice’s room. It’s been off for some time, but Sir Robert complained\r\nof cold and had it on again.\n\n“Harvey runs it\ufeff—he’s one of my lads. This very morning he came to me\r\nwith this which he found raking out the cinders. He didn’t like the look\r\nof it.”\n\n“Nor do I,” said Holmes. “What do you make of it, Watson?”\n\nIt was burned to a black cinder, but there could be no question as to\r\nits anatomical significance.\n\n“It’s the upper condyle of a human femur,” said I.\n\n“Exactly!” Holmes had become very serious. “When does this lad tend\r\nto the furnace?”\n\n“He makes it up every evening and then leaves it.”\n\n“Then anyone could visit it during the night?”\n\n“Yes, sir.”\n\n“Can you enter it from outside?”\n\n“There is one door from outside. There is another which leads up by a\r\nstair to the passage in which Lady Beatrice’s room is situated.”\n\n“These are deep waters, Mr.\xa0Mason; deep and rather\r\ndirty. You say that Sir Robert was not at home last night?”\n\n“No, sir.”\n\n“Then, whoever was burning bones, it was not he.”\n\n“That’s true, sir.”\n\n“What is the name of that inn you spoke of?”\n\n“The Green Dragon.”\n\n“Is there good fishing in that part of Berkshire?” The honest trainer\r\nshowed very clearly upon his face that he was convinced that yet another\r\nlunatic had come into his harassed life.\n\n“Well, sir, I’ve heard there are trout in the mill-stream and pike in\r\nthe Hall lake.”\n\n“That’s good enough. Watson and I are famous fishermen\ufeff—are we not,\r\nWatson? You may address us in future at the Green Dragon. We should\r\nreach it tonight. I need not say that we don’t want to see you,\r\nMr.\xa0Mason, but a note will reach us, and no doubt I could\r\nfind you if I want you. When we have gone a little farther into the\r\nmatter I will let you have a considered opinion.”\n\nThus it was that on a bright May evening Holmes and I found ourselves\r\nalone in a first-class carriage and bound for the little\r\n“halt-on-demand” station of Shoscombe. The rack above us was covered\r\nwith a formidable litter of rods, reels, and baskets. On reaching our\r\ndestination a short drive took us to an old-fashioned tavern, where a\r\nsporting host, Josiah Barnes, entered eagerly into our plans for the\r\nextirpation of the fish of the neighbourhood.\n\n“What about the Hall lake and the chance of a pike?” said Holmes.\n\nThe face of the innkeeper clouded.\n\n“That wouldn’t do, sir. You might chance to find yourself in the lake\r\nbefore you were through.”\n\n“How’s that, then?”\n\n“It’s Sir Robert, sir. He’s terrible jealous of touts. If you two\r\nstrangers were as near his training quarters as that he’d be after you\r\nas sure as fate. He ain’t taking no chances, Sir Robert ain’t.”\n\n“I’ve heard he has a horse entered for the Derby.”\n\n“Yes, and a good colt, too. He carries all our money for the race,\r\nand all Sir Robert’s into the bargain. By the way”\ufeff—he looked at us with\r\nthoughtful eyes\ufeff—“I suppose you ain’t on the turf yourselves?”\n\n“No, indeed. Just two weary Londoners who badly need some good\r\nBerkshire air.”\n\n“Well, you are in the right place for that. There is a deal of it\r\nlying about. But mind what I have told you about Sir Robert. He’s the\r\nsort that strikes first and speaks afterwards. Keep clear of the\r\npark.”\n\n“Surely, Mr.\xa0Barnes! We certainly shall. By the way,\r\nthat was a most beautiful spaniel that was whining in the hall.”\n\n“I should say it was. That was the real Shoscombe breed. There ain’t\r\na better in England.”\n\n“I am a dog-fancier myself,” said Holmes. “Now, if it is a fair\r\nquestion, what would a prize dog like that cost?”\n\n“More than I could pay, sir. It was Sir Robert himself who gave me\r\nthis one. That’s why I have to keep it on a lead. It would be off to the\r\nHall in a jiffy if I gave it its head.”\n\n“We are getting some cards in our hand, Watson,” said Holmes when the\r\nlandlord had left us. “It’s not an easy one to play, but we may see our\r\nway in a day or two. By the way, Sir Robert is still in London, I hear.\r\nWe might, perhaps, enter the sacred domain tonight without fear of\r\nbodily assault. There are one or two points on which I should like\r\nreassurance.”\n\n“Have you any theory, Holmes?”\n\n“Only this, Watson, that something happened a week or so ago which\r\nhas cut deep into the life of the Shoscombe household. What is that\r\nsomething? We can only guess at it from its effects. They seem to be of\r\na curiously mixed character. But that should surely help us. It is only\r\nthe colourless, uneventful case which is hopeless.\n\n“Let us consider our data. The brother no longer visits the beloved\r\ninvalid sister. He gives away her favourite dog. Her dog, Watson! Does\r\nthat suggest nothing to you?”\n\n“Nothing but the brother’s spite.”\n\n“Well, it might be so. Or\ufeff—well, there is an alternative. Now to\r\ncontinue our review of the situation from the time that the quarrel, if\r\nthere is a quarrel, began. The lady keeps her room, alters her habits,\r\nis not seen save when she drives out with her maid, refuses to stop at\r\nthe stables to greet her favourite horse and apparently takes to drink.\r\nThat covers the case, does it not?”\n\n“Save for the business in the crypt.”\n\n“That is another line of thought. There are two, and I beg you will\r\nnot tangle them. Line A, which concerns Lady Beatrice, has a vaguely\r\nsinister flavour, has it not?”\n\n“I can make nothing of it.”\n\n“Well, now, let us take up line B, which concerns Sir Robert. He is\r\nmad keen upon winning the Derby. He is in the hands of the Jews, and may\r\nat any moment be sold up and his racing stables seized by his creditors.\r\nHe is a daring and desperate man. He derives his income from his sister.\r\nHis sister’s maid is his willing tool. So far we seem to be on fairly\r\nsafe ground, do we not?”\n\n“But the crypt?”\n\n“Ah, yes, the crypt! Let us suppose, Watson\ufeff—it is merely a scandalous\r\nsupposition, a hypothesis put forward for argument’s sake\ufeff—that Sir\r\nRobert has done away with his sister.”\n\n“My dear Holmes, it is out of the question.”\n\n“Very possibly, Watson. Sir Robert is a man of an honourable stock.\r\nBut you do occasionally find a carrion crow among the eagles. Let us for\r\na moment argue upon this supposition. He could not fly the country until\r\nhe had realized his fortune, and that fortune could only be realized by\r\nbringing off this coup with Shoscombe Prince. Therefore, he has still to\r\nstand his ground. To do this he would have to dispose of the body of his\r\nvictim, and he would also have to find a substitute who would\r\nimpersonate her. With the maid as his confidante that would not be\r\nimpossible. The woman’s body might be conveyed to the crypt, which is a\r\nplace so seldom visited, and it might be secretly destroyed at night in\r\nthe furnace, leaving behind it such evidence as we have already seen.\r\nWhat say you to that, Watson?”\n\n“Well, it is all possible if you grant the original monstrous\r\nsupposition.”\n\n“I think that there is a small experiment which we may try tomorrow,\r\nWatson, in order to throw some light on the matter. Meanwhile, if we\r\nmean to keep up our characters, I suggest that we have our host in for a\r\nglass of his own wine and hold some high converse upon eels and dace,\r\nwhich seems to be the straight road to his affections. We may chance to\r\ncome upon some useful local gossip in the process.”\n\nIn the morning Holmes discovered that we had come without our\r\nspoon-bait for jack, which absolved us from fishing for the day. About\r\neleven o’clock we started for a walk, and he obtained leave to take the\r\nblack spaniel with us.\n\n“This is the place,” said he as we came to two high park gates with\r\nheraldic griffins towering above them. “About midday,\r\nMr.\xa0Barnes informs me, the old lady takes a drive, and the\r\ncarriage must slow down while the gates are opened. When it comes\r\nthrough, and before it gathers speed, I want you, Watson, to stop the\r\ncoachman with some question. Never mind me. I shall stand behind this\r\nholly-bush and see what I can see.”\n\nIt was not a long vigil. Within a quarter of an hour we saw the big\r\nopen yellow barouche coming down the long avenue, with two splendid,\r\nhigh-stepping gray carriage horses in the shafts. Holmes crouched behind\r\nhis bush with the dog. I stood unconcemedly swinging a cane in the\r\nroadway. A keeper ran out and the gates swung open.\n\nThe carriage had slowed to a walk, and I was able to get a good look\r\nat the occupants. A highly coloured young woman with flaxen hair and\r\nimpudent eyes sat on the left. At her right was an elderly person with\r\nrounded back and a huddle of shawls about her face and shoulders which\r\nproclaimed the invalid. When the horses reached the highroad I held up\r\nmy hand with an authoritative gesture, and as the coachman pulled up I\r\ninquired if Sir Robert was at Shoscombe Old Place.\n\nAt the same moment Holmes stepped out and released the spaniel. With\r\na joyous cry it dashed forward to the carriage and sprang upon the step.\r\nThen in a moment its eager greeting changed to furious rage, and it\r\nsnapped at the black skirt above it.\n\n“Drive on! Drive on!” shrieked a harsh voice. The coachman lashed the\r\nhorses, and we were left standing in the roadway.\n\n“Well, Watson, that’s done it,” said Holmes as he fastened the lead\r\nto the neck of the excited spaniel. “He thought it was his mistress, and\r\nhe found it was a stranger. Dogs don’t make mistakes.”\n\n“But it was the voice of a man!” I cried.\n\n“Exactly! We have added one card to our hand, Watson, but it needs\r\ncareful playing, all the same.”\n\nMy companion seemed to have no further plans for the day, and we did\r\nactually use our fishing tackle in the mill-stream with the result that\r\nwe had a dish of trout for our supper. It was only after that meal that\r\nHolmes showed signs of renewed activity. Once more we found ourselves\r\nupon the same road as in the morning, which led us to the park gates. A\r\ntall, dark figure was awaiting us there, who proved to be our London\r\nacquaintance, Mr.\xa0John Mason, the trainer.\n\n“Good evening, gentlemen,” said he. “I got your note,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes. Sir Robert has not returned yet, but I hear\r\nthat he is expected tonight.”\n\n“How far is this crypt from the house?” asked Holmes.\n\n“A good quarter of a mile.”\n\n“Then I think we can disregard him altogether.”\n\n“I can’t afford to do that, Mr.\xa0Holmes. The moment he\r\narrives he will want to see me to get the last news of Shoscombe\r\nPrince.”\n\n“I see! In that case we must work without you,\r\nMr.\xa0Mason. You can show us the crypt and then leave\r\nus.”\n\nIt was pitch-dark and without a moon, but Mason led us over the\r\ngrasslands until a dark mass loomed up in front of us which proved to be\r\nthe ancient chapel. We entered the broken gap which was once the porch,\r\nand our guide, stumbling among heaps of loose masonry, picked his way to\r\nthe corner of the building, where a steep stair led down into the crypt.\r\nStriking a match, he illuminated the melancholy place\ufeff—dismal and\r\nevil-smelling, with ancient crumbling walls of rough-hewn stone, and\r\npiles of coffins, some of lead and some of stone, extending upon one\r\nside right up to the arched and groined roof which lost itself in the\r\nshadows above our heads. Holmes had lit his lantern, which shot a tiny\r\ntunnel of vivid yellow light upon the mournful scene. Its rays were\r\nreflected back from the coffin-plates, many of them adorned with the\r\ngriffin and coronet of this old family which carried its honours even to\r\nthe gate of Death.\n\n“You spoke of some bones, Mr.\xa0Mason. Could you show them\r\nbefore you go?”\n\n“They are here in this corner.” The trainer strode across and then\r\nstood in silent surprise as our light was turned upon the place. “They\r\nare gone,” said he.\n\n“So I expected,” said Holmes, chuckling. “I fancy the ashes of them\r\nmight even now be found in that oven which had already consumed a\r\npart.”\n\n“But why in the world would anyone want to burn the bones of a man\r\nwho has been dead a thousand years?” asked John Mason.\n\n“That is what we are here to find out,” said Holmes. “It may mean a\r\nlong search, and we need not detain you. I fancy that we shall get our\r\nsolution before morning.”\n\nWhen John Mason had left us, Holmes set to work making a very careful\r\nexamination of the graves, ranging from a very ancient one, which\r\nappeared to be Saxon, in the centre, through a long line of Norman Hugos\r\nand Odos, until we reached the Sir William and Sir Denis Falder of the\r\neighteenth century. It was an hour or more before Holmes came to a\r\nleaden coffin standing on end before the entrance to the vault. I heard\r\nhis little cry of satisfaction and was aware from his hurried but\r\npurposeful movements that he had reached a goal. With his lens he was\r\neagerly examining the edges of the heavy lid. Then he drew from his\r\npocket a short jemmy, a box-opener, which he thrust into a chink,\r\nlevering back the whole front, which seemed to be secured by only a\r\ncouple of clamps. There was a rending, tearing sound as it gave way, but\r\nit had hardly hinged back and partly revealed the contents before we had\r\nan unforeseen interruption.\n\nSomeone was walking in the chapel above. It was the firm, rapid step\r\nof one who came with a definite purpose and knew well the ground upon\r\nwhich he walked. A light streamed down the stairs, and an instant later\r\nthe man who bore it was framed in the Gothic archway. He was a terrible\r\nfigure, huge in stature and fierce in manner. A large stable-lantern\r\nwhich he held in front of him shone upward upon a strong, heavily\r\nmoustached face and angry eyes, which glared round him into every recess\r\nof the vault, finally fixing themselves with a deadly stare upon my\r\ncompanion and myself.\n\n“Who the devil are you?” he thundered. “And what are you doing upon\r\nmy property?” Then, as Holmes returned no answer he took a couple of\r\nsteps forward and raised a heavy stick which he carried. “Do you hear\r\nme?” he cried. “Who are you? What are you doing here?” His cudgel\r\nquivered in the air.\n\nBut instead of shrinking Holmes advanced to meet him.\n\n“I also have a question to ask you, Sir Robert,” he said in his\r\nsternest tone. “Who is this? And what is it doing here?”\n\nHe turned and tore open the coffin-lid behind him. In the glare of\r\nthe lantern I saw a body swathed in a sheet from head to foot with\r\ndreadful, witch-like features, all nose and chin, projecting at one end,\r\nthe dim, glazed eyes staring from a discoloured and crumbling face.\n\nThe baronet had staggered back with a cry and supported himself\r\nagainst a stone sarcophagus.\n\n“How came you to know of this?” he cried. And then, with some return\r\nof his truculent manner: “What business is it of yours?”\n\n“My name is Sherlock Holmes,” said my companion. “Possibly it is\r\nfamiliar to you. In any case, my business is that of every other good\r\ncitizen\ufeff—to uphold the law. It seems to me that you have much to answer\r\nfor.”\n\nSir Robert glared for a moment, but Holmes’s quiet voice and cool,\r\nassured manner had their effect.\n\n“\u200a’Fore God, Mr.\xa0Holmes, it’s all right,” said he.\r\n“Appearances are against me, I’ll admit, but I could act no\r\notherwise.”\n\n“I should be happy to think so, but I fear your explanations must be\r\nbefore the police.”\n\nSir Robert shrugged his broad shoulders.\n\n“Well, if it must be, it must. Come up to the house and you can judge\r\nfor yourself how the matter stands.”\n\nA quarter of an hour later we found ourselves in what I judge, from\r\nthe lines of polished barrels behind glass covers, to be the gun-room of\r\nthe old house. It was comfortably furnished, and here Sir Robert left us\r\nfor a few moments. When he returned he had two companions with him; the\r\none, the florid young woman whom we had seen in the carriage; the other,\r\na small rat-faced man with a disagreeably furtive manner. These two wore\r\nan appearance of utter bewilderment, which showed that the baronet had\r\nnot yet had time to explain to them the turn events had taken.\n\n“There,” said Sir Robert with a wave of his hand, “are\r\nMr.\xa0and Mrs.\xa0Norlett.\r\nMrs.\xa0Norlett, under her maiden name of Evans, has for some\r\nyears been my sister’s confidential maid. I have brought them here\r\nbecause I feel that my best course is to explain the true position to\r\nyou, and they are the two people upon earth who can substantiate what I\r\nsay.”\n\n“Is this necessary, Sir Robert? Have you thought what you are doing?”\r\ncried the woman.\n\n“As to me, I entirely disclaim all responsibility,” said her\r\nhusband.\n\nSir Robert gave him a glance of contempt. “I will take all\r\nresponsibility,” said he. “Now, Mr.\xa0Holmes, listen to a\r\nplain statement of the facts.\n\n“You have clearly gone pretty deeply into my affairs or I should not\r\nhave found you where I did. Therefore, you know already, in all\r\nprobability, that I am running a dark horse for the Derby and that\r\neverything depends upon my success. If I win, all is easy. If I\r\nlose\ufeff—well, I dare not think of that!”\n\n“I understand the position,” said Holmes.\n\n“I am dependent upon my sister, Lady Beatrice, for everything. But it\r\nis well known that her interest in the estate is for her own life only.\r\nFor myself, I am deeply in the hands of the Jews. I have always known\r\nthat if my sister were to die my creditors would be on to my estate like\r\na flock of vultures. Everything would be seized\ufeff—my stables, my\r\nhorses\ufeff—everything. Well, Mr.\xa0Holmes, my sister did\r\ndie just a week ago.”\n\n“And you told no one!”\n\n“What could I do? Absolute ruin faced me. If I could stave things off\r\nfor three weeks all would be well. Her maid’s husband\ufeff—this man here\ufeff—is\r\nan actor. It came into our heads\ufeff—it came into my head\ufeff—that he could for\r\nthat short period personate my sister. It was but a case of appearing\r\ndaily in the carriage, for no one need enter her room save the maid. It\r\nwas not difficult to arrange. My sister died of the dropsy which had\r\nlong afflicted her.”\n\n“That will be for a coroner to decide.”\n\n“Her doctor would certify that for months her symptoms have\r\nthreatened such an end.”\n\n“Well, what did you do?”\n\n“The body could not remain there. On the first night Norlett and I\r\ncarried it out to the old well-house, which is now never used. We were\r\nfollowed, however, by her pet spaniel, which yapped continually at the\r\ndoor, so I felt some safer place was needed. I got rid of the spaniel,\r\nand we carried the body to the crypt of the church. There was no\r\nindignity or irreverence, Mr.\xa0Holmes. I do not feel that I\r\nhave wronged the dead.”\n\n“Your conduct seems to me inexcusable, Sir Robert.”\n\nThe baronet shook his head impatiently. “It is easy to preach,” said\r\nhe. “Perhaps you would have felt differently if you had been in my\r\nposition. One cannot see all one’s hopes and all one’s plans shattered\r\nat the last moment and make no effort to save them. It seemed to me that\r\nit would be no unworthy resting-place if we put her for the time in one\r\nof the coffins of her husband’s ancestors lying in what is still\r\nconsecrated ground. We opened such a coffin, removed the contents, and\r\nplaced her as you have seen her. As to the old relics which we took out,\r\nwe could not leave them on the floor of the crypt. Norlett and I removed\r\nthem, and he descended at night and burned them in the central furnace.\r\nThere is my story, Mr.\xa0Holmes, though how you forced my\r\nhand so that I have to tell it is more than I can say.”\n\nHolmes sat for some time lost in thought.\n\n“There is one flaw in your narrative, Sir Robert,” he said at last.\r\n“Your bets on the race, and therefore your hopes for the future, would\r\nhold good even if your creditors seized your estate.”\n\n“The horse would be part of the estate. What do they care for my\r\nbets? As likely as not they would not run him at all. My chief creditor\r\nis, unhappily, my most bitter enemy\ufeff—a rascally fellow, Sam Brewer, whom\r\nI was once compelled to horsewhip on Newmarket Heath. Do you suppose\r\nthat he would try to save me?”\n\n“Well, Sir Robert,” said Holmes, rising, “this matter must, of\r\ncourse, be referred to the police. It was my duty to bring the facts to\r\nlight, and there I must leave it. As to the morality or decency of your\r\nconduct, it is not for me to express an opinion. It is nearly midnight,\r\nWatson, and I think we may make our way back to our humble abode.”\n\nIt is generally known now that this singular episode ended upon a\r\nhappier note than Sir Robert’s actions deserved. Shoscombe Prince did\r\nwin the Derby, the sporting owner did net eighty thousand pounds in\r\nbets, and the creditors did hold their hand until the race was over,\r\nwhen they were paid in full, and enough was left to reestablish Sir\r\nRobert in a fair position in life. Both police and coroner took a\r\nlenient view of the transaction, and beyond a mild censure for the delay\r\nin registering the lady’s decease, the lucky owner got away scatheless\r\nfrom this strange incident in a career which has now outlived its\r\nshadows and promises to end in an honoured old age.\n\nThe Adventure of the Retired Colourman\n\nSherlock Holmes was in a melancholy and philosophic mood that\r\nmorning. His alert practical nature was subject to such reactions.\n\n“Did you see him?” he asked.\n\n“You mean the old fellow who has just gone out?”\n\n“Precisely.”\n\n“Yes, I met him at the door.”\n\n“What did you think of him?”\n\n“A pathetic, futile, broken creature.”\n\n“Exactly, Watson. Pathetic and futile. But is not all life pathetic\r\nand futile? Is not his story a microcosm of the whole? We reach. We\r\ngrasp. And what is left in our hands at the end? A shadow. Or worse than\r\na shadow\ufeff—misery.”\n\n“Is he one of your clients?”\n\n“Well, I suppose I may call him so. He has been sent on by the Yard.\r\nJust as medical men occasionally send their incurables to a quack. They\r\nargue that they can do nothing more, and that whatever happens the\r\npatient can be no worse than he is.”\n\n“What is the matter?”\n\nHolmes took a rather soiled card from the table. “Josiah Amberley. He\r\nsays he was junior partner of Brickfall and Amberley, who are\r\nmanufacturers of artistic materials. You will see their names upon\r\npaintboxes. He made his little pile, retired from business at the age of\r\nsixty-one, bought a house at Lewisham, and settled down to rest after a\r\nlife of ceaseless grind. One would think his future was tolerably\r\nassured.”\n\n“Yes, indeed.”\n\nHolmes glanced over some notes which he had scribbled upon the back\r\nof an envelope.\n\n“Retired in 1896, Watson. Early in 1897 he married a woman twenty\r\nyears younger than himself\ufeff—a good-looking woman, too, if the photograph\r\ndoes not flatter. A competence, a wife, leisure\ufeff—it seemed a straight\r\nroad which lay before him. And yet within two years he is, as you have\r\nseen, as broken and miserable a creature as crawls beneath the sun.”\n\n“But what has happened?”\n\n“The old story, Watson. A treacherous friend and a fickle wife. It\r\nwould appear that Amberley has one hobby in life, and it is chess. Not\r\nfar from him at Lewisham there lives a young doctor who is also a\r\nchess-player. I have noted his name as Dr.\xa0Ray Ernest.\r\nErnest was frequently in the house, and an intimacy between him and\r\nMrs.\xa0Amberley was a natural sequence, for you must admit\r\nthat our unfortunate client has few outward graces, whatever his inner\r\nvirtues may be. The couple went off together last week\ufeff—destination\r\nuntraced. What is more, the faithless spouse carried off the old man’s\r\ndeed-box as her personal luggage with a good part of his life’s savings\r\nwithin. Can we find the lady? Can we save the money? A commonplace\r\nproblem so far as it has developed, and yet a vital one for Josiah\r\nAmberley.”\n\n“What will you do about it?”\n\n“Well, the immediate question, my dear Watson, happens to be, What\r\nwill you do?\ufeff—if you will be good enough to understudy me. You\r\nknow that I am preoccupied with this case of the two Coptic Patriarchs,\r\nwhich should come to a head today. I really have not time to go out to\r\nLewisham, and yet evidence taken on the spot has a special value. The\r\nold fellow was quite insistent that I should go, but I explained my\r\ndifficulty. He is prepared to meet a representative.”\n\n“By all means,” I answered. “I confess I don’t see that I can be of\r\nmuch service, but I am willing to do my best.” And so it was that on a\r\nsummer afternoon I set forth to Lewisham, little dreaming that within a\r\nweek the affair in which I was engaging would be the eager debate of all\r\nEngland.\n\nIt was late that evening before I returned to Baker Street and gave\r\nan account of my mission. Holmes lay with his gaunt figure stretched in\r\nhis deep chair, his pipe curling forth slow wreaths of acrid tobacco,\r\nwhile his eyelids drooped over his eyes so lazily that he might almost\r\nhave been asleep were it not that at any halt or questionable passage of\r\nmy narrative they half lifted, and two gray eyes, as bright and keen as\r\nrapiers, transfixed me with their searching glance.\n\n“The Haven is the name of Mr.\xa0Josiah Amberley’s house,”\r\nI explained. “I think it would interest you, Holmes. It is like some\r\npenurious patrician who has sunk into the company of his inferiors. You\r\nknow that particular quarter, the monotonous brick streets, the weary\r\nsuburban highways. Right in the middle of them, a little island of\r\nancient culture and comfort, lies this old home, surrounded by a high\r\nsunbaked wall mottled with lichens and topped with moss, the sort of\r\nwall\ufeff—”\n\n“Cut out the poetry, Watson,” said Holmes severely. “I note that it\r\nwas a high brick wall.”\n\n“Exactly. I should not have known which was The Haven had I not asked\r\na lounger who was smoking in the street. I have a reason for mentioning\r\nhim. He was a tall, dark, heavily moustached, rather military-looking\r\nman. He nodded in answer to my inquiry and gave me a curiously\r\nquestioning glance, which came back to my memory a little later.\n\n“I had hardly entered the gateway before I saw\r\nMr.\xa0Amberley coming down the drive. I only had a glimpse of\r\nhim this morning, and he certainly gave me the impression of a strange\r\ncreature, but when I saw him in full light his appearance was even more\r\nabnormal.”\n\n“I have, of course, studied it, and yet I should be interested to\r\nhave your impression,” said Holmes.\n\n“He seemed to me like a man who was literally bowed down by care. His\r\nback was curved as though he carried a heavy burden. Yet he was not the\r\nweakling that I had at first imagined, for his shoulders and chest have\r\nthe framework of a giant, though his figure tapers away into a pair of\r\nspindled legs.”\n\n“Left shoe wrinkled, right one smooth.”\n\n“I did not observe that.”\n\n“No, you wouldn’t. I spotted his artificial limb. But proceed.”\n\n“I was struck by the snaky locks of grizzled hair which curled from\r\nunder his old straw hat, and his face with its fierce, eager expression\r\nand the deeply lined features.”\n\n“Very good, Watson. What did he say?”\n\n“He began pouring out the story of his grievances. We walked down the\r\ndrive together, and of course I took a good look round. I have never\r\nseen a worse-kept place. The garden was all running to seed, giving me\r\nan impression of wild neglect in which the plants had been allowed to\r\nfind the way of Nature rather than of art. How any decent woman could\r\nhave tolerated such a state of things, I don’t know. The house, too, was\r\nslatternly to the last degree, but the poor man seemed himself to be\r\naware of it and to be trying to remedy it, for a great pot of green\r\npaint stood in the centre of the hall, and he was carrying a thick brush\r\nin his left hand. He had been working on the woodwork.\n\n“He took me into his dingy sanctum, and we had a long chat. Of\r\ncourse, he was disappointed that you had not come yourself. ‘I hardly\r\nexpected,’ he said, ‘that so humble an individual as myself, especially\r\nafter my heavy financial loss, could obtain the complete attention of so\r\nfamous a man as Mr.\xa0Sherlock Holmes.’\n\n“I assured him that the financial question did not arise. ‘No of\r\ncourse, it is art for art’s sake with him,’ said he, ‘but even on the\r\nartistic side of crime he might have found something here to study. And\r\nhuman nature, Dr.\xa0Watson\ufeff—the black ingratitude of it all!\r\nWhen did I ever refuse one of her requests? Was ever a woman so\r\npampered? And that young man\ufeff—he might have been my own son. He had the\r\nrun of my house. And yet see how they have treated me! Oh,\r\nDr.\xa0Watson, it is a dreadful, dreadful world!’\n\n“That was the burden of his song for an hour or more. He had, it\r\nseems, no suspicion of an intrigue. They lived alone save for a woman\r\nwho comes in by the day and leaves every evening at six. On that\r\nparticular evening old Amberley, wishing to give his wife a treat, had\r\ntaken two upper circle seats at the Haymarket Theatre. At the last\r\nmoment she had complained of a headache and had refused to go. He had\r\ngone alone. There seemed to be no doubt about the fact, for he produced\r\nthe unused ticket which he had taken for his wife.”\n\n“That is remarkable\ufeff—most remarkable,” said Holmes, whose interest in\r\nthe case seemed to be rising. “Pray continue, Watson. I find your\r\nnarrative most arresting. Did you personally examine this ticket? You\r\ndid not, perchance, take the number?”\n\n“It so happens that I did,” I answered with some pride. “It chanced\r\nto be my old school number, thirty-one, and so is stuck in my head.”\n\n“Excellent, Watson! His seat, then, was either thirty or\r\nthirty-two.”\n\n“Quite so,” I answered with some mystification. “And on B row.”\n\n“That is most satisfactory. What else did he tell you?”\n\n“He showed me his strongroom, as he called it. It really is a\r\nstrongroom\ufeff—like a bank\ufeff—with iron door and shutter\ufeff—burglarproof, as he\r\nclaimed. However, the woman seems to have had a duplicate key, and\r\nbetween them they had carried off some seven thousand pounds’ worth of\r\ncash and securities.”\n\n“Securities! How could they dispose of those?”\n\n“He said that he had given the police a list and that he hoped they\r\nwould be unsaleable. He had got back from the theatre about midnight and\r\nfound the place plundered, the door and window open, and the fugitives\r\ngone. There was no letter or message, nor has he heard a word since. He\r\nat once gave the alarm to the police.”\n\nHolmes brooded for some minutes.\n\n“You say he was painting. What was he painting?”\n\n“Well, he was painting the passage. But he had already painted the\r\ndoor and woodwork of this room I spoke of.”\n\n“Does it not strike you as a strange occupation in the\r\ncircumstances?”\n\n“\u200a‘One must do something to ease an aching heart.’ That was his own\r\nexplanation. It was eccentric, no doubt, but he is clearly an eccentric\r\nman. He tore up one of his wife’s photographs in my presence\ufeff—tore it up\r\nfuriously in a tempest of passion. ‘I never wish to see her damned face\r\nagain,’ he shrieked.”\n\n“Anything more, Watson?”\n\n“Yes, one thing which struck me more than anything else. I had driven\r\nto the Blackheath Station and had caught my train there when, just as it\r\nwas starting, I saw a man dart into the carriage next to my own. You\r\nknow that I have a quick eye for faces, Holmes. It was undoubtedly the\r\ntall, dark man whom I had addressed in the street. I saw him once more\r\nat London Bridge, and then I lost him in the crowd. But I am convinced\r\nthat he was following me.”\n\n“No doubt! No doubt!” said Holmes. “A tall, dark, heavily moustached\r\nman, you say, with gray-tinted sunglasses?”\n\n“Holmes, you are a wizard. I did not say so, but he had\r\ngray-tinted sunglasses.”\n\n“And a Masonic tiepin?”\n\n“Holmes!”\n\n“Quite simple, my dear Watson. But let us get down to what is\r\npractical. I must admit to you that the case, which seemed to me to be\r\nso absurdly simple as to be hardly worth my notice, is rapidly assuming\r\na very different aspect. It is true that though in your mission you have\r\nmissed everything of importance, yet even those things which have\r\nobtruded themselves upon your notice give rise to serious thought.”\n\n“What have I missed?”\n\n“Don’t be hurt, my dear fellow. You know that I am quite impersonal.\r\nNo one else would have done better. Some possibly not so well. But\r\nclearly you have missed some vital points. What is the opinion of the\r\nneighbours about this man Amberley and his wife? That surely is of\r\nimportance. What of Dr.\xa0Ernest? Was he the gay Lothario one\r\nwould expect? With your natural advantages, Watson, every lady is your\r\nhelper and accomplice. What about the girl at the post-office, or the\r\nwife of the greengrocer? I can picture you whispering soft nothings with\r\nthe young lady at the Blue Anchor, and receiving hard somethings in\r\nexchange. All this you have left undone.”\n\n“It can still be done.”\n\n“It has been done. Thanks to the telephone and the help of the Yard,\r\nI can usually get my essentials without leaving this room. As a matter\r\nof fact, my information confirms the man’s story. He has the local\r\nrepute of being a miser as well as a harsh and exacting husband. That he\r\nhad a large sum of money in that strongroom of his is certain. So also\r\nis it that young Dr.\xa0Ernest, an unmarried man, played chess\r\nwith Amberley, and probably played the fool with his wife. All this\r\nseems plain sailing, and one would think that there was no more to be\r\nsaid\ufeff—and yet!\ufeff—and yet!”\n\n“Where lies the difficulty?”\n\n“In my imagination, perhaps. Well, leave it there, Watson. Let us\r\nescape from this weary workaday world by the side door of music. Carina\r\nsings tonight at the Albert Hall, and we still have time to dress, dine,\r\nand enjoy.”\n\nIn the morning I was up betimes, but some toast crumbs and two empty\r\neggshells told me that my companion was earlier still. I found a\r\nscribbled note upon the table.\n\nDear\r\nWatson:\n\nThere are one or two points of contact which I should wish to\r\nestablish with Mr.\xa0Josiah Amberley. When I have done so we\r\ncan dismiss the case\ufeff—or not. I would only ask you to be on hand about\r\nthree o’clock, as I conceive it possible that I may want you.\n\nS. H.\n\nI saw nothing of Holmes all day, but at the hour named he returned,\r\ngrave, preoccupied, and aloof. At such times it was wiser to leave him\r\nto himself.\n\n“Has Amberley been here yet?”\n\n“No.”\n\n“Ah! I am expecting him.”\n\nHe was not disappointed, for presently the old fellow arrived with a\r\nvery worried and puzzled expression upon his austere face.\n\n“I’ve had a telegram, Mr.\xa0Holmes. I can make nothing of\r\nit.” He handed it over, and Holmes read it aloud.\n\n“Come at once without fail. Can give you information as to your\r\nrecent loss.”\n\nElman.\n\nThe Vicarage.\n\n“Dispatched at 2:10 from Little Purlington,” said Holmes. “Little\r\nPurlington is in Essex, I believe, not far from Frinton. Well, of course\r\nyou will start at once. This is evidently from a responsible person, the\r\nvicar of the place. Where is my Crockford? Yes, here we have him: ‘J. C.\r\nElman, M. A., Living of Moosmoor cum Little Purlington.’ Look up the\r\ntrains, Watson.”\n\n“There is one at 5:20 from Liverpool Street.”\n\n“Excellent. You had best go with him, Watson. He may need help or\r\nadvice. Clearly we have come to a crisis in this affair.”\n\nBut our client seemed by no means eager to start.\n\n“It’s perfectly absurd, Mr.\xa0Holmes,” he said. “What can\r\nthis man possibly know of what has occurred? It is waste of time and\r\nmoney.”\n\n“He would not have telegraphed to you if he did not know something.\r\nWire at once that you are coming.”\n\n“I don’t think I shall go.”\n\nHolmes assumed his sternest aspect.\n\n“It would make the worst possible impression both on the police and\r\nupon myself, Mr.\xa0Amberley, if when so obvious a clue arose\r\nyou should refuse to follow it up. We should feel that you were not\r\nreally in earnest in this investigation.”\n\nOur client seemed horrified at the suggestion.\n\n“Why, of course I shall go if you look at it in that way,” said he.\r\n“On the face of it, it seems absurd to suppose that this parson knows\r\nanything, but if you think\ufeff—”\n\n“I do think,” said Holmes with emphasis, and so we were\r\nlaunched upon our journey. Holmes took me aside before we left the room\r\nand gave me one word of counsel, which showed that he considered the\r\nmatter to be of importance. “Whatever you do, see that he really\r\ndoes go,” said he. “Should he break away or return, get to the\r\nnearest telephone exchange and send the single word ‘Bolted.’ I will\r\narrange here that it shall reach me wherever I am.”\n\nLittle Purlington is not an easy place to reach, for it is on a\r\nbranch line. My remembrance of the journey is not a pleasant one, for\r\nthe weather was hot, the train slow, and my companion sullen and silent,\r\nhardly talking at all save to make an occasional sardonic remark as to\r\nthe futility of our proceedings. When we at last reached the little\r\nstation it was a two-mile drive before we came to the Vicarage, where a\r\nbig, solemn, rather pompous clergyman received us in his study. Our\r\ntelegram lay before him.\n\n“Well, gentlemen,” he asked, “what can I do for you?”\n\n“We came,” I explained, “in answer to your wire.”\n\n“My wire! I sent no wire.”\n\n“I mean the wire which you sent to Mr.\xa0Josiah Amberley\r\nabout his wife and his money.”\n\n“If this is a joke, sir, it is a very questionable one,” said the\r\nvicar angrily. “I have never heard of the gentleman you name, and I have\r\nnot sent a wire to anyone.”\n\nOur client and I looked at each other in amazement.\n\n“Perhaps there is some mistake,” said I; “are there perhaps two\r\nvicarages? Here is the wire itself, signed Elman and dated from the\r\nVicarage.”\n\n“There is only one vicarage, sir, and only one vicar, and this wire\r\nis a scandalous forgery, the origin of which shall certainly be\r\ninvestigated by the police. Meanwhile, I can see no possible object in\r\nprolonging this interview.”\n\nSo Mr.\xa0Amberley and I found ourselves on the roadside in\r\nwhat seemed to me to be the most primitive village in England. We made\r\nfor the telegraph office, but it was already closed. There was a\r\ntelephone, however, at the little Railway Arms, and by it I got into\r\ntouch with Holmes, who shared in our amazement at the result of our\r\njourney.\n\n“Most singular!” said the distant voice. “Most remarkable! I much\r\nfear, my dear Watson, that there is no return train tonight. I have\r\nunwittingly condemned you to the horrors of a country inn. However,\r\nthere is always Nature, Watson\ufeff—Nature and Josiah Amberley\ufeff—you can be in\r\nclose commune with both.” I heard his dry chuckle as he turned away.\n\nIt was soon apparent to me that my companion’s reputation as a miser\r\nwas not undeserved. He had grumbled at the expense of the journey, had\r\ninsisted upon travelling third-class, and was now clamorous in his\r\nobjections to the hotel bill. Next morning, when we did at last arrive\r\nin London, it was hard to say which of us was in the worse humour.\n\n“You had best take Baker Street as we pass,” said I.\r\n“Mr.\xa0Holmes may have some fresh instructions.”\n\n“If they are not worth more than the last ones they are not of much\r\nuse,” said Amberley with a malevolent scowl. None the less, he kept me\r\ncompany. I had already warned Holmes by telegram of the hour of our\r\narrival, but we found a message waiting that he was at Lewisham and\r\nwould expect us there. That was a surprise, but an even greater one was\r\nto find that he was not alone in the sitting-room of our client. A\r\nstern-looking, impassive man sat beside him, a dark man with gray-tinted\r\nglasses and a large Masonic pin projecting from his tie.\n\n“This is my friend Mr.\xa0Barker,” said Holmes. “He has\r\nbeen interesting himself also in your business, Mr.\xa0Josiah\r\nAmberley, though we have been working independently. But we both have\r\nthe same question to ask you!”\n\nMr.\xa0Amberley sat down heavily. He sensed impending\r\ndanger. I read it in his straining eyes and his twitching features.\n\n“What is the question, Mr.\xa0Holmes?”\n\n“Only this: What did you do with the bodies?”\n\nThe man sprang to his feet with a hoarse scream. He clawed into the\r\nair with his bony hands. His mouth was open, and for the instant he\r\nlooked like some horrible bird of prey. In a flash we got a glimpse of\r\nthe real Josiah Amberley, a misshapen demon with a soul as distorted as\r\nhis body. As he fell back into his chair he clapped his hand to his lips\r\nas if to stifle a cough. Holmes sprang at his throat like a tiger and\r\ntwisted his face towards the ground. A white pellet fell from between\r\nhis gasping lips.\n\n“No shortcuts, Josiah Amberley. Things must be done decently and in\r\norder. What about it, Barker?”\n\n“I have a cab at the door,” said our taciturn companion.\n\n“It is only a few hundred yards to the station. We will go together.\r\nYou can stay here, Watson. I shall be back within half an hour.”\n\nThe old colourman had the strength of a lion in that great trunk of\r\nhis, but he was helpless in the hands of the two experienced\r\nman-handlers. Wriggling and twisting he was dragged to the waiting cab,\r\nand I was left to my solitary vigil in the ill-omened house. In less\r\ntime than he had named, however, Holmes was back, in company with a\r\nsmart young police inspector.\n\n“I’ve left Barker to look after the formalities,” said Holmes. “You\r\nhad not met Barker, Watson. He is my hated rival upon the Surrey shore.\r\nWhen you said a tall dark man it was not difficult for me to complete\r\nthe picture. He has several good cases to his credit, has he not,\r\nInspector?”\n\n“He has certainly interfered several times,” the inspector answered\r\nwith reserve.\n\n“His methods are irregular, no doubt, like my own. The irregulars are\r\nuseful sometimes, you know. You, for example, with your compulsory\r\nwarning about whatever he said being used against him, could never have\r\nbluffed this rascal into what is virtually a confession.”\n\n“Perhaps not. But we get there all the same, Mr.\xa0Holmes.\r\nDon’t imagine that we had not formed our own views of this case, and\r\nthat we would not have laid our hands on our man. You will excuse us for\r\nfeeling sore when you jump in with methods which we cannot use, and so\r\nrob us of the credit.”\n\n“There shall be no such robbery, MacKinnon. I assure you that I\r\nefface myself from now onward, and as to Barker, he has done nothing\r\nsave what I told him.”\n\nThe inspector seemed considerably relieved.\n\n“That is very handsome of you, Mr.\xa0Holmes. Praise or\r\nblame can matter little to you, but it is very different to us when the\r\nnewspapers begin to ask questions.”\n\n“Quite so. But they are pretty sure to ask questions anyhow, so it\r\nwould be as well to have answers. What will you say, for example, when\r\nthe intelligent and enterprising reporter asks you what the exact points\r\nwere which aroused your suspicion, and finally gave you a certain\r\nconviction as to the real facts?”\n\nThe inspector looked puzzled.\n\n“We don’t seem to have got any real facts yet,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes. You say that the prisoner, in the presence of\r\nthree witnesses, practically confessed by trying to commit suicide, that\r\nhe had murdered his wife and her lover. What other facts have you?”\n\n“Have you arranged for a search?”\n\n“There are three constables on their way.”\n\n“Then you will soon get the clearest fact of all. The bodies cannot\r\nbe far away. Try the cellars and the garden. It should not take long to\r\ndig up the likely places. This house is older than the water-pipes.\r\nThere must be a disused well somewhere. Try your luck there.”\n\n“But how did you know of it, and how was it done?”\n\n“I’ll show you first how it was done, and then I will give the\r\nexplanation which is due to you, and even more to my longsuffering\r\nfriend here, who has been invaluable throughout. But, first, I would\r\ngive you an insight into this man’s mentality. It is a very unusual\r\none\ufeff—so much so that I think his destination is more likely to be\r\nBroadmoor than the scaffold. He has, to a high degree, the sort of mind\r\nwhich one associates with the medieval Italian nature rather than with\r\nthe modern Briton. He was a miserable miser who made his wife so\r\nwretched by his niggardly ways that she was a ready prey for any\r\nadventurer. Such a one came upon the scene in the person of this\r\nchess-playing doctor. Amberley excelled at chess\ufeff—one mark, Watson, of a\r\nscheming mind. Like all misers, he was a jealous man, and his jealousy\r\nbecame a frantic mania. Rightly or wrongly, he suspected an intrigue. He\r\ndetermined to have his revenge, and he planned it with diabolical\r\ncleverness. Come here!”\n\nHolmes led us along the passage with as much certainty as if he had\r\nlived in the house and halted at the open door of the strongroom.\n\n“Pooh! What an awful smell of paint!” cried the inspector.\n\n“That was our first clue,” said Holmes. “You can thank\r\nDr.\xa0Watson’s observation for that, though he failed to draw\r\nthe inference. It set my foot upon the trail. Why should this man at\r\nsuch a time be filling his house with strong odours? Obviously, to cover\r\nsome other smell which he wisfhed to conceal\ufeff—some guilty smell which\r\nwould suggest suspicions. Then came the idea of a room such as you see\r\nhere with iron door and shutter\ufeff—a hermetically sealed room. Put those\r\ntwo facts together, and whither do they lead? I could only determine\r\nthat by examining the house myself. I was already certain that the case\r\nwas serious, for I had examined the box-office chart at the Haymarket\r\nTheatre\ufeff—another of Dr.\xa0Watson’s bull’s-eyes\ufeff—and ascertained\r\nthat neither B thirty nor thirty-two of the upper circle had been\r\noccupied that night. Therefore, Amberley had not been to the theatre,\r\nand his alibi fell to the ground. He made a bad slip when he allowed my\r\nastute friend to notice the number of the seat taken for his wife. The\r\nquestion now arose how I might be able to examine the house. I sent an\r\nagent to the most impossible village I could think of, and summoned my\r\nman to it at such an hour that he could not possibly get back. To\r\nprevent any miscarriage, Dr.\xa0Watson accompanied him. The\r\ngood vicar’s name I took, of course, out of my Crockford. Do I make it\r\nall clear to you?”\n\n“It is masterly,” said the inspector in an awed voice.\n\n“There being no fear of interruption I proceeded to burgle the house.\r\nBurglary has always been an alternative profession had I cared to adopt\r\nit, and I have little doubt that I should have come to the front.\r\nObserve what I found. You see the gas-pipe along the skirting here. Very\r\ngood. It rises in the angle of the wall, and there is a tap here in the\r\ncorner. The pipe runs out into the strongroom, as you can see, and ends\r\nin that plaster rose in the centre of the ceiling, where it is concealed\r\nby the ornamentation. That end is wide open. At any moment by turning\r\nthe outside tap the room could be flooded with gas. With door and\r\nshutter closed and the tap full on I would not give two minutes of\r\nconscious sensation to anyone shut up in that little chamber. By what\r\ndevilish device he decoyed them there I do not know, but once inside the\r\ndoor they were at his mercy.”\n\nThe inspector examined the pipe with interest. “One of our officers\r\nmentioned the smell of gas,” said he, “but of course the window and door\r\nwere open then, and the paint\ufeff—or some of it\ufeff—was already about. He had\r\nbegun the work of painting the day before, according to his story. But\r\nwhat next, Mr.\xa0Holmes?”\n\n“Well, then came an incident which was rather unexpected to myself. I\r\nwas slipping through the pantry window in the early dawn when I felt a\r\nhand inside my collar, and a voice said: ‘Now, you rascal, what are you\r\ndoing in there?’ When I could twist my head round I looked into the\r\ntinted spectacles of my friend and rival, Mr.\xa0Barker. It\r\nwas a curious foregathering and set us both smiling. It seems that he\r\nhad been engaged by Dr.\xa0Ray Ernest’s family to make some\r\ninvestigations and had come to the same conclusion as to foul play. He\r\nhad watched the house for some days and had spotted\r\nDr.\xa0Watson as one of the obviously suspicious characters\r\nwho had called there. He could hardly arrest Watson, but when he saw a\r\nman actually climbing out of the pantry window there came a limit to his\r\nrestraint. Of course, I told him how matters stood and we continued the\r\ncase together.”\n\n“Why him? Why not us?”\n\n“Because it was in my mind to put that little test which answered so\r\nadmirably. I fear you would not have gone so far.”\n\nThe inspector smiled.\n\n“Well, maybe not. I understand that I have your word,\r\nMr.\xa0Holmes, that you step right out of the case now and\r\nthat you turn all your results over to us.”\n\n“Certainly, that is always my custom.”\n\n“Well, in the name of the force I thank you. It seems a clear case,\r\nas you put it, and there can’t be much difficulty over the bodies.”\n\n“I’ll show you a grim little bit of evidence,” said Holmes, “and I am\r\nsure Amberley himself never observed it. You’ll get results, Inspector,\r\nby always putting yourself in the other fellow’s place, and thinking\r\nwhat you would do yourself. It takes some imagination, but it pays. Now,\r\nwe will suppose that you were shut up in this little room, had not two\r\nminutes to live, but wanted to get even with the fiend who was probably\r\nmocking at you from the other side of the door. What would you do?”\n\n“Write a message.”\n\n“Exactly. You would like to tell people how you died. No use writing\r\non paper. That would be seen. If you wrote on the wall someone might\r\nrest upon it. Now, look here! Just above the skirting is scribbled with\r\na purple indelible pencil: ‘We we\ufeff—’ That’s all.”\n\n“What do you make of that?”\n\n“Well, it’s only a foot above the ground. The poor devil was on the\r\nfloor dying when he wrote it. He lost his senses before he could\r\nfinish.”\n\n“He was writing, ‘We were murdered.’\u200a”\n\n“That’s how I read it. If you find an indelible pencil on the\r\nbody\ufeff—”\n\n“We’ll look out for it, you may be sure. But those securities?\r\nClearly there was no robbery at all. And yet he did possess\r\nthose bonds. We verified that.”\n\n“You may be sure he has them hidden in a safe place. When the whole\r\nelopement had passed into history, he would suddenly discover them and\r\nannounce that the guilty couple had relented and sent back the plunder\r\nor had dropped it on the way.”\n\n“You certainly seem to have met every difficulty,” said the\r\ninspector. “Of course, he was bound to call us in, but why he should\r\nhave gone to you I can’t understand.”\n\n“Pure swank!” Holmes answered. “He felt so clever and so sure of\r\nhimself that he imagined no one could touch him. He could say to any\r\nsuspicious neighbour, ‘Look at the steps I have taken. I have consulted\r\nnot only the police but even Sherlock Holmes.’\u200a”\n\nThe inspector laughed.\n\n“We must forgive you your ‘even,’ Mr.\xa0Holmes,” said he;\r\n“it’s as workmanlike a job as I can remember.”\n\nA couple of days later my friend tossed across to me a copy of the\r\nbiweekly North Surrey Observer. Under a series of flaming\r\nheadlines, which began with “The Haven Horror” and ended with “Brilliant\r\nPolice Investigation,” there was a packed column of print which gave the\r\nfirst consecutive account of the affair. The concluding paragraph is\r\ntypical of the whole. It ran thus:\n\nThe remarkable acumen by which Inspector MacKinnon deduced from the\r\nsmell of paint that some other smell, that of gas, for example, might be\r\nconcealed; the bold deduction that the strongroom might also be the\r\ndeath-chamber, and the subsequent inquiry which led to the discovery of\r\nthe bodies in a disused well, cleverly concealed by a dogkennel, should\r\nlive in the history of crime as a standing example of the intelligence\r\nof our professional detectives.\n\n“Well, well, MacKinnon is a good fellow,” said Holmes with a tolerant\r\nsmile. “You can file it in our archives, Watson. Some day the true story\r\nmay be told.”\n\nColophon\n\nThe Casebook of Sherlock Holmes\r\nwas published in 1927 by\r\nArthur Conan\r\nDoyle.\n\nThis ebook was produced for\r\nStandard Ebooks\r\nby\r\nMarshall Clow,\r\nand is based on a transcription produced in 2001 by\r\nRoy Glashan\r\nfor\r\nProject\r\nGutenberg Australia\r\nand on digital scans from the\r\nInternet\r\nArchive.\n\nThe cover page is adapted from\r\nFire in London, Seen from Hampstead,\r\na painting completed in 1826 by\r\nJohn\r\nConstable.\r\nThe cover and title pages feature the\r\nLeague Spartan and Sorts Mill\r\nGoudy\r\ntypefaces created in 2014 and 2009 by\r\nThe League of Moveable\r\nType.\n\nThis edition was released on\r\nMarch 16, 2023,\r\n5:00\xa0p.m.\r\nand is based on\r\nrevision 15d3967.\r\nThe first edition of this ebook was released on\r\nMarch 16, 2023,\r\n5:12\xa0a.m.\r\nYou can check for updates to this ebook, view its revision history, or\r\ndownload it for different ereading systems at\r\nstandardebooks.org/ebooks/arthur-conan-doyle/the-casebook-of-sherlock-holmes.\n\nThe volunteer-driven Standard Ebooks project relies on readers like\r\nyou to submit typos, corrections, and other improvements. 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