



SHERLOCK

A Study in Pink
a novelization
by rk wright



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Thanks to Mr. Arthur Conan Doyle for the stories.

Thanks to Messrs. Gatiss and Moffat for bringing them to life so beautifully. Well done,
sirs.

Thanks to Maya and Sam for their help.

This story is based on the screenplay by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss. This story is ©Hartwood Films and the BBC. This adaptation is unofficial and unauthorized and not associated with the above or any other copyright holders.

Dear Stephen Moffat, Mark Gatiss, and the legal team at Hartswood Films and the BBC,

As is completely and painfully obvious within the first four paragraphs, I trampled right over copyright laws when I wrote this story. I'm not familiar with British copyright vs. United States, but I'm also not an idiot.

I started writing this novelization in the midst of a pretty bad depression. I don't know if you've ever been depressed, let alone so depressed that the things you used to be able to do—including the One Thing you've always been able to count on being able to do—drown under the sludge, but it sucks. And it's scary. I wanted to write, but I couldn't. Literally could not put words together. I'd stare at a blank page like it was a mathematical formula I didn't even know how to read, let alone solve. So I started writing this. It was creative without being overwhelming. It was working backwards, which I could do, even when all my forward-looking thoughts had vanished into the aether. I have a love of Sherlock Holmes that I inherited from my grandfather along with his back issues of the *Baker Street Journal* and his collection of Holmes pastiches. From Neil Gaiman and Caleb Carr, Nicholas Meyer and Loren Estleman, Holmes and Watson have found life from under the pens of many authors. I haven't had much practice at creating mysteries, but I love Holmes and Watson, and I love Holmes pastiches that expand upon the detective without changing him.

Having this project to do kept me afloat until I started doing better, and no longer feared drowning inside my own head. I hope you forgive this clumsy effort to take part in the legacy of the stories of Messrs. Holmes and Watson. I assure you I don't accept any monetary compensation for this story, or any other that take place within the Holmes and Watson universe. However, legal hackles being what they are, if you wish me to remove this story from any and all places where it may be found I will be more than happy to do so. Please, please, please do not sue me, as (like most writers) I have very little money to be sued for.

And above all, I hope you enjoy the story, should you choose to read it.

Thank you,
R. Wright

“[London] was a city in which the very old and the awkwardly new jostled each other, not uncomfortably, but without respect; a city of shops and offices and restaurants and homes, of parks and churches, of ignored monuments and remarkably unpalatial palaces; a city of hundreds of districts with strange names—Crouch End, Chalk Farm, Earl’s Court, Marble Arch—and oddly distinct identities; a noisy, dirty, cheerful, troubled city, which fed on tourists, needed them as it despised them, in which the average speed of transportation through the city had not increased in three hundred years, following five hundred years of fitful road-widening and unskilful compromises between the needs of traffic, whether horse-drawn, or, more recently, motorized, and the needs of pedestrians; a city inhabited by and teeming with people of every colour and manner and kind.”

—Neil Gaiman, Neverwhere

PROLOGUE

There was a chill in the air, in spite of the sun, but John would have worn the sweater either way. One side effect of the Army that hadn't abated—the weather had little to no effect on his wardrobe.

Ella Thompson smiled hospitably at him as she let him into her office. “How's your blog going?” she asked.

John sat in his usual chair, across from her. “Yeah...good. Very good.”

“You haven't written a word, have you?”

“You just wrote, ‘Still has trust issues’.”

“And you read my writing upside down,” she countered. “See what I mean?”

John tried to keep his face neutral. He didn't know why he kept these appointments. He knew he should tell her about the dreams. About the panic attacks that were so much louder than the night noises of London that filtered through his open window. About the loaded gun in his desk drawer. About how the anxiety and the solitude kept getting worse, not better, lurking inside his chest like a prowling cat, digging its claws into his heart.

But he knew what she'd do. Prescribe anti-depressants, have him evaluated by a specialist and referred to additional treatment? And it wouldn't help anyway. He couldn't think of any resources that she could access that would help him. Ella Thompson was all right, but she wasn't a soldier. She hadn't been there. She could never understand.

He realized she was talking and reminded himself to pay attention. “...You're a soldier. It's going to take you awhile to adjust to civilian life. And writing a blog about everything that happens to you will honestly help you.”

Whether or not she understood wasn't the point, of course. The point was supposed to be for him to understand himself, right? But he couldn't separate the two. Never could. He couldn't write about the war. He wasn't a literary man, he could never do justice to the noise and the chaos and the fear. Couldn't describe the clarity that sometimes descends when a soldier is put in front of you bleeding from a dozen different places, but you know just what to do. Couldn't possibly explain the heat and the cold and the slabs of boredom—the bloody fucking *boredom*—that bookended the chaos.

The chaos had ended with a bullet, and with surgeries, and with pain, and as he mended the long stretches of boredom had grown, had shouldered the chaos off to the side. Had taken over his future.

Nothing ever happened to him.

OCTOBER 12TH

4:42PM

Forty-five minutes after his train arrived, Jeff Patterson called his secretary in a state of high annoyance, which did not improve when she explained what had happened. “What do you mean, there’s no ruddy car?”

Helen paced in front of the windows and tried to ignore the headache forming in back of her eyeballs. She could hear the high echo of Victoria behind him. “He went to Waterloo, I’m sorry. Get a cab.”

“A cab? I never get cabs.”

She glanced over her shoulder to make sure nobody could hear her, she lowered her voice. “I love you.”

“When?” He was smiling. She could tell.

“Get. A. Cab.”

He hung up without saying goodbye.

He never made it to the office. He was found in an empty office building that was up for lease. There were no weapons nearby. His body had no ante mortem bruising or marks of restraint.

NOVEMBER 26TH

8:24PM

It was raining. Hell, it was worse than raining. The gutters were flooded and the water washed up over the pavement. The grass was saturated. James Phillimore turned his collar up against the rain, wishing he had his mack or at least an umbrella like Rob—not that Rob was much drier than him.

Two minutes, said James to Rob, running back to his house to get an umbrella and grab dry socks. Fifteen minutes later, Rob went back to look for him, but his friend would never more be seen in this world.

How had he gotten to the gymnasium? What had he done to himself? How had “I’m going back to the house to get my umbrella” become this? He’d seemed fine. Everyone agreed. He hadn’t been depressed, hadn’t shown any of the signs that hindsight was supposed to reveal. What had *happened?*

JANUARY 27TH

11:37PM

The birthday girl was pissed, but not yet alarmingly so. Pissed enough that her mates were hoping she'd stop drinking soon. Drunk enough to dance, not yet so drunk she was sick.

The rest of the party was drunk, too. It sprawled through several rooms and the music was loud, and mostly everyone—except for the responsible sorts—was having fun. Everyone was drunk enough that nobody quite noticed when Beth Davenport slipped away. Nobody knew how she got to the building site. Her car was still in the lot, back at the party. Her mate had confiscated her car keys to keep her from driving.

JANUARY 28TH

5:04PM

Lestrade hated these things. The cameras and lights and eyes made him feel stupid and clumsy and self-conscious. He knew he was a good cop, else he wouldn't be in charge of this investigation, but talking at a press conference required a certain amount of discretion and grace that he did not have. If he couldn't say everything, he'd rather say nothing. Sergeant Donovan, who half-thought she was Detective Inspector already, had eagerly agreed to do most of the talking. Most of it.

“The body of Beth Davenport, Junior Minister for Transport, was found late last night at a building site in Greater London. Preliminary investigation suggests that this was suicide. We can confirm that this apparent suicide closely resembles those of Sir Jeffrey Patterson and James Phillimore,” she said, reading from the department's prepared statement. “In the light of this, these incidents are now being treated as linked. The investigation is ongoing, but Detective Inspector Lestrade will take questions now.”

“Detective Inspector, how could suicides be linked?” asked a reporter in front whom Lestrade did not know.

“Well, they all took the same poison. They were all found in places they had no reason to be. None of them had shown any prior indica—“

“But you can't have serial suicides.”

You're telling me, thought Lestrade. “Well, apparently you can.”

“These three people, there's nothing that links them?” asked another reporter.

“There's no link found yet, but we're looking for it, there has to be one.” God, he sounded desperate and disbelieving even to himself.

Dozens of phones whose owners had failed to turn them to silent chimed with alerts all at once, including Donovan's.

WRONG!

“If you've all got texts,” announced Donovan, frowning at her phone, “Please ignore them.”

“It just says ‘wrong,’” said the first reporter.

“Yeah, well, just ignore that. If there are no more questions for Detective Inspector Lestrade, I'm going to bring the session to an end.”

Of course there were more questions. There were always more questions.

“If they're suicides, what are you investigating?”

“As I say, these suicides are clearly linked. It's an unusual situation, we've got our best people investigating—“

Everyone's phones chimed.

WRONG!

"It says 'wrong' again," said a reporter.

"One more question," said Donovan.

"Is there any chance that these are murders?" came the question from the back. "And if they are, is this the work of a serial killer?"

Right, thought Lestrade. Because that's just what London needs to do right now, panic over a nonexistent serial killer. "I know you like writing about this," said Lestrade, trying to sound professional, "but these do appear to be suicides. We do know the difference. The poison was clearly self-administered."

"Yes, but if they are murders, how do people keep themselves safe?"

"Well...don't commit suicide." And there it was. He could hear the Deputy Chief Officer howling for his head already. Donovan hissed, "*Daily Mail*" under her breath. He tried to backtrack. "Obviously, this is a frightening time for people, but all anyone has to do is exercise reasonable precautions. We are all as safe as we want to be."

WRONG!

Lestrade glanced perfunctorily at his own text message—**You know where to find me. S.H.**—before pocketing his phone. He muttered polite thanks to the microphone and stood up to go.

Donovan followed him out. "You've got to stop him doing that, he's making us look like idiots."

"If you could tell me how he does it, I'll stop it," Lestrade retorted. She should know better than to acknowledge the texts to the press anyway. All that did was lend them credibility. It wasn't like Sherlock would ever talk to the press, even if they bothered to track him down.

JANUARY 29TH

11:07AM

John was walking through Russell Square Gardens, leaning heavily on his cane and looking for a cheap lunch, when he heard himself being hailed. “John! John Watson!”

He stopped and turned. The portly man that he had just walked past but not observed was chasing after him. He searched his memory, looking for the man.

“Stamford. Mike Stamford? We were at Bart’s together?”

Stamford. Yes. There it was. He had been a year or so behind John at Bart’s. John shifted his cane to his other hand so he could shake hands with Mike. “Yes. Sorry. Yes. Mike. Hello.”

“Yeah, I know. I got fat,” he smiled, forgiving John’s half-blank recognition. “I heard you were abroad somewhere getting shot at? What happened?”

John tried to shrug nonchalantly. “Got shot.” He never quite got used to watching the way people’s smiles hitched with uncertainty when he said that.

On the way to get coffee and a sandwich, John told Mike the short version of joining the Army, his tours in Afghanistan, the firefight that had ended his career. They ambled back to a bench in the park and watched the nannies strolling along with prams. John tried to not feel like an old man. At least they weren’t feeding pigeons.

“You’re still at Bart’s, then?” he asked Mike.

“Yeah. Teaching now. Bright young things, like we used to be...God, I hate them,” Mike said with a smile. “What about you? Just staying in town while you get yourself sorted?”

“Can’t afford London on an army pension.”

“And you couldn’t bear to be anywhere else. Not the John Watson I know.”

“Yeah. I’m not that John Watson,” John said, almost to himself. He tried to flex his stiff hand without letting Mike see.

“Couldn’t Harry help?”

Maybe if he was willing to ask for it. “Yeah. Like that’s going to happen.”

“I dunno, mate. Get a flatshare or something.”

John looked ruefully at his friend. “Come on. Who’d want me for a flatmate?” He didn’t tell Mike that he’d thought of all this before, and so had his therapist, to no effect. Ella Thompson thought that he was talking himself out of it, that it was a symptom of depression or an inability to take even the smallest risks. He maintained that it wasn’t possible to talk yourself out of things that weren’t feasible anyway.

To his surprise, Mike chuckled. “What?” asked John.

“You’re the second person to say that to me today.”

Oh really. “Who was the first?”

JANUARY 29TH

11:12AM

When he got to the mortuary of St Bart's, he didn't pause to take off his wool trench coat or his scarf, but made straight for the gurney. He unzipped the body bag and sniffed. The smell of putrefaction. "How fresh?" he asked Molly, the mortuary technician. Rigor mortis had passed and the body was pale, limp, and waxy. Still cold from the refrigerator.

"Just in. 67, natural causes." She added, unnecessarily, "He used to work here. I knew him. He was nice."

"Fine." He turned away from the body toward Molly, not bothering to conceal his excitement. "We'll start with the riding crop." He shrugged off his overcoat and hung it up as Molly struggled to extract the corpse from the body bag in something approaching a dignified fashion and excused herself from the lab. She didn't like to watch him beat corpses. He didn't understand why, it wasn't like he was beating a person.

He picked up the riding crop.

When Molly returned ten minutes later, she was disturbed, but trying—and failing—not to show it. She never wanted to watch, but somehow she always seemed to. "So...bad day was it?" she joked. She tried to smile but she was twisting her hands together.

He didn't see the point in answering this. "I need to know if bruises form in the next twenty minutes. A man's alibi depends on it. Text me."

"Listen, I was wondering. Maybe later, when you've finished—"

"You're wearing lipstick. You weren't wearing lipstick before."

"I, uh, refreshed it a bit."

Did she. "Sorry, you were saying?"

"I was wondering if you'd like to have coffee."

He was already halfway out the door. "Black, two sugars please. I'll be upstairs."

When he got to the lab, he threw his trench coat over a stool and sat at his favourite microscope. He had always enjoyed the solitude of the lab. He used it only when students weren't around so he didn't have to listen to nonsense chatter. Only the hum of the lights and the fans on the CPUs and the click of a glass slide into the microscope. Here, the minutiae of order and predictability that could be seen under the microscope was extrapolated out to the rest of the room. Slides in their place. Beakers in the cupboard, sorted by size. Everything cleaned. Everything had a place and a reason for being there. The

advanced state of chaos in his own rooms sent Mrs Hudson into despair, but the fact was, he knew precisely where to find everything. In this room, where he had no control over the space and its other users, the organization was relaxing.

Two knocks, and then the door opened. Mike again, with a man. A soldier, leaning on a cane. Mike had found him a flatmate.

The man looked around the lab. “Bit different from my day.”

“You have no idea,” said Mike, perching on a lab stool.

“Mike, can I borrow your phone? There’s no signal on mine.”

“What’s wrong with a landline?”

“I prefer to text.”

“Sorry,” said Mike. “It’s in my coat.”

“Here,” said the newcomer, pulling a phone out of his pocket. “Use mine.”

He cast a glance from Mike to the newcomer. “Oh. Thank you.”

“This is an old friend of mine, John Watson,” said Mike.

He slid the keypad out from the phone and started typing a message. “Afghanistan or Iraq?”

It took the newcomer—John—a beat to realize he was being addressed. “Sorry?”

Mike, who had seen this game before, smiled a little but said nothing.

“Which was it, Afghanistan or Iraq?”

John’s attempts to figure out what precisely was happening were transparent. “Afghanistan, sorry, how did you—?”

Molly chose this moment to reappear. With coffee. “Ahh, Molly, coffee, thank you,” he said, taking the mug. “What happened to the lipstick?”

She stammered. “It wasn’t working for me.”

“Really? I thought it was a big improvement. Your mouth’s too small now.”

“Okay.” She always said that when she didn’t know how else to respond.

“How do you feel about the violin?” he asked abruptly.

John looked to Mike for cues but didn’t get any. “Sorry, what?”

“I play the violin when I’m thinking. Sometimes I don’t talk for days on end. Would that bother you? Potential flatmates should know the worst about each other.”

John looked at Mike again. “You told him about me?”

Mike shook his head. “Not a word.”

“Then who said anything about flatmates?”

“I did,” he said, handing John his phone back and pulling his coat on. “I told Mike this morning

I must be a difficult man to find a flatmate for, and here he is, just after lunch with an old friend clearly just home from military service in Afghanistan. It wasn't a difficult leap."

"How did you know about Afghanistan?"

This was a useless question and only prolonged a conversation that could have been over forty-seven seconds ago. "I've got my eye on a nice little place in central London. Together we ought to be able to afford it. Meet there tomorrow evening, seven o'clock. Sorry, got to dash, I left my riding crop in the mortuary."

"Is that it?" asked John.

"Is that what?"

He paused at the door as incredulity and exasperation bloomed on John's face before it smoothed out. "We've only just met, and we're going to go and look at a flat?"

"Problem?"

"We don't know a thing about each other. I don't know where we're meeting. I don't even know your name."

For the first time, he paused long enough to hold John's gaze. "I know you're an army doctor and you've been invalided home from Afghanistan. I know you've got a brother who's worried about you but you won't go to him for help because you don't approve of him, possibly because he's an alcoholic but more likely because he recently walked out on his wife. And I know that your therapist thinks your limp's psychosomatic, quite correctly I'm afraid... That's enough to be going on with, don't you think?" He opened the door to leave, then turned back as an afterthought. "The name's Sherlock Holmes, and the address is 221B Baker Street. Afternoon." He nodded to Mike, who lifted a hand in farewell, and was gone.

"Yeah," said Mike, in response to John's unspoken question, "he's always like that."

JANUARY 29TH

6:39PM

Back in his bare room, John sank onto his bed, still puzzling over the man—Sherlock Holmes—from that afternoon. It wasn't so much what he knew—he supposed Sherlock had got his name somehow and looked him up—it was the speedy and nonchalant way he'd said it. No searching for words, no trying to come up with a story or explanation. Either he was the best liar John had ever met...or he wasn't lying.

John pulled out his mobile phone to see the text that Sherlock had sent from his phone.

If brother has green ladder arrest brother.

Well. That explained everything.

JANUARY 30TH

6:58PM

A cab pulled up in front of 221 Baker Street just as John was walking up to it. Sherlock Holmes climbed out. “Hello.”

“Mr Holmes.”

“Sherlock, please.” He shook John’s hand.

“This is a prime spot,” said John, looking up and down the block. “Must be expensive.”

“Mrs Hudson, the landlady, is giving me a special deal. She owes me a favour. A few years back her husband got himself sentenced to death in Florida. I was able to help out.”

“So you stopped her husband being executed?”

Sherlock turned his peculiar, unblinking gaze to John. “Oh, no. I ensured it.”

John wondered if conversations with Sherlock always felt this way, or if the feeling of being left behind lessened as you got to know him. Before he could think of a response to the incarcerated ex-husband, however, the front door opened and an older lady came bustling out. “Sherlock!” she cried. Sherlock gave her a brief, polite hug, then directed her attention to John. “Mrs Hudson, Dr John Watson.”

“Hello dear, come in,” she said, patting him familiarly on the back as he went by. They went up to the first floor—Sherlock took the stairs two at a time, John as fast as his cane and his leg would allow—to flat B. Sherlock opened the door without ceremony, and John stepped in to look around.

His first thought was that either the previous tenants hadn’t moved out, or that Mrs Hudson was using the area for storage. The desk and its chairs were piled high with papers and crates. On the floor, in a laundry basket, were more papers and file folders. The book cases were overstuffed and dusty and it look like at least three days worth of the *London Times* had accumulated on the armchair. A music stand stood forlornly in the corner, next to what looked like a computer scanner that wasn’t plugged in. Access to the sofa and coffee table was blocked by a yawning steamer trunk distended with yet more books, file folders, and papers. The wallpaper looked like it had been up since the Great War, but the large windows that faced the street were quite nice.

“Well,” said John, looking round, “This could be very nice. Very nice indeed...”

“Yes,” agreed Sherlock. “My thoughts precisely, so I went straight ahead and moved in.”

“...as soon as we get all this rubbish cleaned out...” finished John at the same time. They both paused and looked at each other.

John raise his eyebrows. “This is all yours?”

For the first time, Sherlock looked flustered. “Well, obviously I can straighten things up. A bit.”

He started moving piles from the desk to the mantelpiece, displacing a case of mounted beetles and bats as he did so. John looked past the skull on the mantelpiece and into the kitchen. It looked like an extension of the lab at St. Bart's. The table was covered in beakers, test tubes, and a large microscope. To John's surprise, the counters were somewhat clear. Sherlock affixed the mail to the mantel with his penknife.

John pointed with his cane. "That's a skull."

"Friend of mine."

"What do you think, then, Dr Watson?" asked Mrs Hudson, who had entered behind them.

"There's another bedroom upstairs, if you'll be needing two bedrooms."

John blinked at her. "Of course we'll be needing two."

Mrs Hudson rushed to reassure him. "Don't worry, there's all sorts round here. Mrs Turner, next door, she's got married ones." She walked round the corner and saw the state of the kitchen. "Sherlock! The mess you've made!"

John sat himself in the one chair free of rubbish as Sherlock continued to straighten up. "I looked you up on the Internet last night."

Sherlock was turning on his computer. John noticed a solved Rubik's Cube on the desk.

"Anything interesting?"

"Found your website. 'The Science of Deduction.'"

Sherlock couldn't keep the pride off his face. "What did you think?"

John looked at him sceptically. "You said you could identify a software designer by his tie, and an airline pilot by his left thumb."

"Yes. And I can read your military career in your face and your leg and your brother's drinking habits in your mobile phone."

John studied him. He was reluctant to ask for explanations or act impressed. If Sherlock was a charlatan, he didn't want to encourage him, but he also didn't want to leap to conclusions. He liked to let events play out before reacting to them. But he supposed he had to say something. "How?"

Sherlock held his gaze a moment, then turned back to his computer booting up.

Mrs Hudson came bustling back in with the newspaper. "What about these suicides then, Sherlock? Thought that'd be right up your street. Three, exactly the same."

"Four," corrected Sherlock. He was looking out the window at the police car that had just pulled up. "There's been a fourth. There's something different this time."

"A fourth?"

A plainclothes policeman came jogging up the stairs and through the still-open door of the flat.

Sherlock did not waste hellos. “Where?”

The detective did not waste hellos either. “Brixton, Lauriston Gardens.”

“What’s new about this one? You wouldn’t have come to get me if there wasn’t something different.”

“You know how they never leave notes?”

“Yeah.”

“This one did. Will you come?”

“Who’s on forensics?”

“It’s Anderson.”

Sherlock’s interested expression twisted in frustration. “Anderson won’t work with me.”

“Well, he won’t be your assistant.”

“I *need* an assistant.”

“Will you come?”

“Not in a police car. I’ll be right behind.”

“Thank you.” With a nod of his head, the cop acknowledged John and Mrs Hudson, then left as swiftly as he’d come. John looked round for explanation. What was a policeman—a detective, one in plain clothes—doing asking this bloke for help? He had assumed that Sherlock worked at Bart’s in some capacity, so how did the cops figure into it?

Sherlock waited until he heard the front door of 221 close, then he cried, “Brilliant!” He was so consumed with happiness that he was actually jumping up and down. John couldn’t remember if he’d ever seen that outside of a quiz show. “Yes! Four serial suicides and now a note. It’s Christmas! Mrs Hudson, I’ll be late. Might need some food.”

“I’m your landlady, dear. Not your housekeeper.”

“Something cold will do. John, have a cup of tea, make yourself at home.” He was dashing about, putting on his coat, picking up this and that and stowing whatever it was in his pockets. He wrapped his scarf around his neck. “Don’t wait up!” With a slam of the door and a clatter down the steps, he was gone.

Mrs Hudson sighed into the sudden silence. “Look at him, dashing about. My husband was just the same. But you’re more the sitting-down type, I can tell. I’ll make you that cuppa, you rest your leg.”

“*Damn my leg!*” cried John, whacking it with his cane. He regretted his outburst before it was all the way out of his mouth. “Sorry. Sorry. So sorry, it’s just, sometimes this bloody thing...” he tried to smile. Things were happening, but not to him, because—*damn* this leg.

“I understand, dear, I’ve got a hip.”

“A cup of tea would be lovely. Thank you.” He pulled out the newspaper he’d been sitting on and tried to look interested in it.

“Just this once, dear, I’m not your housekeeper.”

“And a couple of biscuits, too, if you’ve got them.”

“Not your housekeeper!”

John had just noticed an article on the suicides with a picture of the copper that had just left—his name was Lestrade—when Sherlock spoke from behind him. John hadn’t heard him return.

“You’re a doctor. In fact, you’re an army doctor.”

John dropped the newspaper and got to his feet. “Yes.”

“Any good?”

John met his gaze. “Very good.”

“Seen a lot of injuries, then? Violent deaths?”

“...Yes.”

“Bit of trouble, too, I bet?”

“Of course, yes. Enough for a lifetime. Far too much.”

Sherlock’s face did not change the way most people’s did when John spoke of the rough bits.

“Want to see some more?”

“Oh, God, yes.” John didn’t even realize how true it was until he said it. He followed Sherlock down the stairs as fast as he could, calling goodbye to Mrs Hudson as he went.

“What, both of you?” she asked, coming out of her kitchen.

Sherlock could not conceal his glee. “Impossible suicides? Four of them? There’s no point sitting at home when there’s finally something fun going on!” He kissed her on the cheek.

“Look at you all happy, it’s not decent.”

“Who cares about decent? The game, Mrs Hudson, is on!” And he was out the door, hailing a taxi.

JANUARY 30TH

7:07PM

In the cab, Sherlock started looking things up on his phone. John didn't say anything, not wanting to be a bother, but Sherlock took a sidelong glance and noticed his face. "Okay. You've got questions."

"Yeah, where are we going?"

"Crime scene. Next."

"Who are you? What do you do?"

"What do you think?"

"I'd say private detective..."

"But?"

"The police don't go to private detectives."

"I'm a consulting detective. The only one in the world. I invented the job."

"And what does that mean?"

"It means that when the police are out of their depth, which is always, they consult me."

"But the police don't consult amateurs."

Sherlock cast a look at him, then back out the window. "When I met you for the first time yesterday, I said 'Afghanistan or Iraq.' You looked surprised."

"Yes, how did you know?"

"I didn't know, I saw. Your haircut and the way you hold yourself says military. But your conversation as you entered the room said trained at Bart's, so, army doctor. Obvious. Your face is tanned, but no tan above the wrists. You've been abroad but not sunbathing. Your limp's really bad when you walk, but you don't ask for a chair, and you stand like you've forgotten about it, so it's at least partly psychosomatic. That says that the original circumstances of the injury were traumatic. Wounded in action, then. Wounded in action, suntan—Afghanistan or Iraq."

"You said I had a therapist."

"With a psychosomatic limp? Of course you've got a therapist." He didn't wait for John to ask another question. Once he got started, he seemed to like explaining. "Then there's your brother. Your phone, it's expensive—email-enabled, MP3 player. But you're looking for a flat-share, you wouldn't waste money on this. It's a gift then. Scratches, not one, many over time. It's been in the same pocket as keys and coins. The man sitting next to me wouldn't treat his one luxury item like this, so it's had a previous owner. The next bit's easy, you know it already."

"The engraving," said John. *To Harry Watson, from Clara, xxx* was visible on the back of the

mobile.

“Harry Watson. Clearly a family member who’s given you his old phone. Not your father, this is a young man’s gadget. Could be a cousin, but you’re a war hero who can’t find a place to live. Unlikely you’ve got an extended family, certainly not one you’re close to, so, brother it is.

“Now, Clara. Who’s Clara? Three kisses says it’s a romantic attachment, expensive phone says wife, not girlfriend. She must have given it to him recently, this model’s only six months old. Marriage in trouble, then. Six months on, he’s just giving it away? If she’d left him, he would’ve kept it. People do. Sentiment. But no, he wanted rid of it. He left her. He gave the phone to you, that says he wants you to stay in touch. You’re looking for cheap accommodation, and you’re not going to your brother for help? It says you’ve got problems with him. Maybe you liked his wife. Maybe you don’t like his drinking.”

“How can you possibly know about the drinking?”

“Shot in the dark. Good one, though,” said Sherlock. “Power connection. Tiny little scuff marks around the edge of it. Every night he goes to plug it in to charge, but his hands are shaking. You never see those marks on a sober man’s phone, never see a drunk’s without them. There you go, see, you were right.”

“I was right? Right about what?”

“The police don’t consult amateurs,” Sherlock said with finality.

There was a slight pause. “That,” said John, very deliberately, “was amazing.”

Sherlock seemed surprised. “You think so?”

“Of course it was. It was extraordinary. Quite extraordinary.”

“That’s not what people normally say.”

“What do people normally say?”

“Piss off.”

John laughed, and so did Sherlock. It felt good to know that the man could laugh. It felt good to be going somewhere. Doing something.

JANUARY 30TH

7:53PM

It was a longish cab ride, over the Thames to South London, but eventually they pulled up in a neighbourhood street that John could tell was usually quiet, but at this particular moment was flashing with whirling police lights and roped off with crime tape. Sherlock had the cabbie drop them at the corner and they approached the crime scene on foot.

“Did I get anything wrong?” asked Sherlock as they walked up the block.

“Harry and me don’t get on. Never have. Clara and Harry split up three months ago and they’re getting a divorce. Harry is a drinker.”

“Spot on, then, I didn’t expect to be right about everything.”

“Harry’s short for Harriet.”

Sherlock stopped walking and stared into middle space. “Harry’s your sister.”

It was all well and good talking about Harry in the car, but now they were actually walking up on the crime scene. “Look,” asked John, “what exactly am I supposed to be doing here?”

“Your sister!” He strode in frustration toward the police barrier.

“No, seriously, what am I doing here?”

“There’s always something.”

“Hello, freak,” said a plainclothes policewoman to Sherlock. John went quiet, uncertain of the protocol. This woman obviously knew Sherlock, and just as obviously didn’t like him. She positioned herself so that they stayed on the other side of the crime tape.

“I’m here to see Detective Inspector Lestrade.”

“Why?”

“I was invited.”

She didn’t move. “Why?”

“I think he wants me to take a look.”

“Well, you know what I think, don’t you?”

“Always, Sally.” Sherlock ducked under the tape. “I even know you didn’t make it home last night.”

John moved forward to lift the tape as well, but Sally put a hand on his chest to stop him. “Who’s this?”

“Colleague of mine, Dr Watson. Dr Watson, Sergeant Sally Donovan.”

An incredulous smile spread over her face. “A colleague? How do you get a colleague? Did he follow you home?”

“Look,” said John to Sherlock, “Would it be better if I just waited?”

“No,” said Sherlock, lifting the tape for John to duck under. Sally spoke into her radio. “Freak’s here. Bringing him in.”

Sherlock walked toward the house in a roundabout way, looking at the pavement as he went. They were met at the door by a lanky man in Tyvek coveralls pulling off rubber gloves.

“Ah, Anderson,” said Sherlock, with a supercilious smile, “Here we are again.”

Like Donovan, Anderson was not friendly. “It’s a crime scene. I don’t want it contaminated. Are we clear on that?”

“Quite clear. And is your wife away for long?”

“Don’t pretend you worked that out, somebody told you that.”

“Your deodorant told me that.”

“My deodorant.”

“It’s for men.”

“Of course it’s for men! I’m wearing it.”

“So is Sergeant Donovan.”

In spite of his clear determination to not be impressed, Anderson spun round to look at Donovan standing behind him. Sherlock sniffed experimentally. “I think it just vaporized. May I go in?”

“Now look,” said Anderson, “Whatever you’re trying to imply—“

“I’m not implying anything. I’m sure Sally came round for a nice little chat and just happened to stay over. And I assume she scrubbed your floors, going by the state of her knees.” And he left them behind on the stoop.

The house that they let themselves into was shabby and unfurnished, with warped floorboards and banisters worn slick and bald from the friction of thousands of hands over the years. The cops had lit the house with portable lights and taken over one of the ground-level rooms to use as a staging area for equipment. Lestrade was in the room pulling on a set of coveralls. John could see mould in the plasterboard behind the peeling wallpaper.

“Who’s this?” asked Lestrade, catching sight of John.

“He’s with me,” said Sherlock.

“But who is he?”

“I said he’s with me.”

John picked up a pair of coveralls. Sherlock had not even taken off his coat. “Aren’t you going to put one on?” asked John.

Sherlock did not bother to respond, but conceded as far as putting on a pair of latex gloves. “So

where are we?” he asked Lestrade, grabbing a pair of latex gloves.

“Upstairs. I can give you two minutes.”

“We may not need longer.”

John did not complain about the stairs, though he wished he could climb faster. They passed several people—uniformed and not—on the narrow, circular staircase. He listened to Lestrade fill in Sherlock on the details.

“Her name’s Jennifer Wilson, according to her credit cards. We’re running them now for contact details. Hasn’t been here long. Some kids found her.”

Jennifer Wilson was all the way in the attic. Like the rest of the house, it was dirty and shabby. The paint and the wallpaper were both peeling; a large hole had been knocked in the wall—Sherlock, John reflected, could probably pinpoint the cause and how long ago it had happened by examining the splintered edges of the planks. The silence stretched between them as they looked at the woman in the centre of the dusty floor. Staring at the dead woman who was lying on her face, John felt his skin go cold under his clothes.

“Shut up,” Sherlock commanded Lestrade.

Lestrade looked at him in surprise. “I didn’t say anything.”

“You were thinking. It’s annoying.”

Sherlock approached the body slowly, taking in the clothing (pink trench coat, matching fingernails and shoes, department store jewellery), the hair (dyed), the note—a single word, *RACHE*, carved into the floor—the chipped fingernails. Without disturbing the body, he checked her pockets, ran his hands over her coat, examined her jewellery. After a minute’s careful examination, during which nobody spoke, he rocked back on his heels and snapped off the gloves.

“Got anything?” asked Lestrade.

“Not much.”

“She’s German,” said Anderson from the doorway. “*Rache* is German for ‘revenge.’ She could be trying to—“

“Yes, thank you for your input,” said Sherlock, closing the door in Anderson’s face and pulling out his mobile phone.

“She’s German?” asked Lestrade.

“Of course she’s not. She’s from out of town though. Intended to stay in London for one night before returning home to Cardiff. So far so obvious.”

“Sorry. Obvious?” asked John.

“What about the message?” asked Lestrade.

“Dr. Watson, what do you think?” asked Sherlock.

“About the message?”

“About the body. You’re a medical man.”

“We have a whole team right outside,” protested Lestrade.

“They won’t work with me.”

“I’m breaking every rule letting *you* in here.”

“Yes. Because you need me.” Sherlock looked flatly at Lestrade. He was not bragging or threatening, simply stating facts.

John didn’t move. He was starting to get a feel for Sherlock’s methods, but wasn’t about to run roughshod over Lestrade’s authority. He had his own methods, after all.

Lestrade, though, did not get defensive. “Yes, I do...God help me.” He rolled his eyes, almost to himself.

“Dr Watson?” said Sherlock again.

John turned and looked at Lestrade, who gave up. “Oh, do as he says, help yourself.” He left the room, calling to Anderson to keep everyone out for a couple of minutes.

John crouched next to the woman, pushing his bad leg out of the way with his hand. He remembered how much of his own life Sherlock had seen with one glance—surely he had seen just as much, if not more, in his examination of this woman. What did Sherlock expect him to see that he hadn’t already seen for himself?

“Well?” asked Sherlock politely.

“What am I doing here?” John asked quietly.

“Helping me make a point.”

“I’m supposed to be helping you pay the rent.”

“But this is more fun.”

“Fun? There’s a woman lying dead.”

“Perfectly sound analysis, but I was hoping you’d go deeper.”

They looked at each other for a moment, then John bent over the woman. After a moment he sat up. “Asphyxiation. Probably. Passed out, choked on her own vomit. Can’t smell any alcohol on her. Could have been a seizure. Possibly drugs.”

“You know what it was, you’ve read the papers,” said Sherlock.

“She’s one of the suicides? One of the four?” Maybe, thought John, but nobody would be able to say that until the autopsy and toxicology report. Until then, she was just a dead woman in an empty room.

Lestrade re-entered. "Two minutes, I said. I'll need anything you've got."

Sherlock stood up. "Victim is in her late thirties. Professional person going by her clothes. I'm guessing something in the media going by the frankly alarming shade of pink. Travelled from Cardiff today, intending to stay in London for one night, it's obvious from the size of her suitcase."

"Suitcase?"

"Suitcase, yes. She's been married for at least ten years, but not happily. She's had a string of lovers. None of them knew she was married."

"Oh, for God's sake," burst out Lestrade, "You're just making this up!"

"Her wedding ring is ten years old at least. The rest of her jewellery's been regularly cleaned, but not her wedding ring. State of her marriage, right there. The inside of the ring is shinier than the outside, that means it's regularly removed. The only polishing it gets is when she works it off her finger. So for work, look at her nails. She doesn't work with her hands. So what, or rather who, does she remove her rings for? Clearly not one lover, she'd never sustain the fiction of being single over that amount of time, so more likely a string of them. Simple."

"Brilliant," said John, staring at him. Then he realized he had interrupted. "Sorry."

"Cardiff?" asked Lestrade.

"It's obvious, isn't it?"

"It's not obvious to me," said John.

"Dear God," said Sherlock, looking from Lestrade to John. "What must it be like in your funny little brains? It must be so boring." He brought himself back to Jennifer Wilson. "Her coat is slightly damp, she's been in heavy rain in the last few hours. No rain anywhere in London in that time. Under her coat collar is damp too, she's turned it up against the wind. She's got an umbrella in her left-hand pocket, but it's dry and unused. Not just wind, then, strong wind, too strong to use her umbrella. We know from her suitcase that she was intending to stay overnight, so she must have come a decent distance but she can't have travelled more than two or three hours because her coat still hasn't dried. So. Where has there been heavy rain and strong wind within the radius of that travel time?" He held up his mobile phone, which was open to the Met Offices website. "Cardiff."

John found himself resisting the urge to applaud. "That's fantastic."

"Could you not do that out loud?" muttered Sherlock.

"Sorry, I'll shut up."

"No, it's...fine."

"Why do you keep saying suitcase?" asked Lestrade.

"Yes, where is it?" asked Sherlock, spinning around to check the corners of the room. "She must

have had a phone or an organizer. Find out who Rachel is.”

“She was writing ‘Rachel?’”

“No, she was leaving an angry note in German,” said Sherlock sarcastically. “Of course she was writing ‘Rachel!’ No other word it can be. The question is, why did she wait until she was dying to write it?” John had not thought about this, but Sherlock had a point. If she was going to poison herself, why didn’t she write the note before taking the poison? And if she’d had a seizure (as he’d suggested), she wouldn’t have been able to write anything at all.

“How do you know she had a suitcase?” asked Lestrade.

“Back of the right leg. Tiny splash marks on the heel and cuff not present on the left. She was dragging a wheeled suitcase behind her with her right hand. You don’t get that splash pattern any other way. A smallish case, going by the spread. A case that size, a woman this clothes-conscious? It can only be an overnight bag so we know she was staying one night. Now where is it? What have you done with it?”

Lestrade shrugged. “There wasn’t a case.”

Sherlock straightened up slowly, staring at Lestrade. “Say that again.”

“There wasn’t a case, there was never any suitcase.”

“Suitcase!” called out Sherlock, bolting past Lestrade into the stairwell. “Did anyone find a suitcase? Was there a suitcase in this house?”

“Sherlock!” Lestrade called after him. “There was no case!”

“They take the poison themselves. They chew, swallow the pills themselves,” said Sherlock urgently, looking up at Lestrade from the landing below. “There are clear signs, even you lot couldn’t miss them.”

“Right, thanks. And?”

“It’s murder. All of them. I don’t know how.” Sherlock was impatient, with Lestrade, for needing explanation; with his body and its annoying need for travel times and an inability to teleport or to make the leaps his mind had already covered. “They’re not suicides, they’re killings. Serial killings.” He clapped his hands in anticipation. A grin crept across his face. “We’ve got ourselves a serial killer. I love those, there’s always something to look forward to.” He resumed running down the stairs.

“Why are you saying that?”

“Her *case*,” said Sherlock in exasperation. “Come on, where is her case? Did she eat it? Someone else was here, and they *took her case*.” A startled look came into his eyes. His gaze drifted down and to the right, and though he kept talking, he no longer seemed as aware of Lestrade or John. “The killer must have driven her here. Forgot the case was in the car.”

“She could have checked into a hotel, left her case there,” suggested John.

“No, she never got to the hotel. Look at her hair! She colour coordinates her lipstick and her shoes, she’s never have left any hotel with her hair still looking—“ he stopped short, his eyes full of epiphany.

“Sherlock?”

“What is it? What?”

“Serial killers. Always hard,” said Sherlock, distracted. “You have to wait for them to make a mistake.”

“We can’t just wait!” exclaimed Lestrade, exasperated.

“We’re done waiting! Look at her, really *look!* Houston, we have a mistake. Get on to Cardiff. Find out who Jennifer Wilson’s family and friends were. Find Rachel!” He was three-quarters of the way down the stairs.

“Of course, yeah, but *what mistake?*” roared Lestrade down the stairwell.

“*Pink!*” Sherlock called back. Then he was gone.

JANUARY 30TH

8:04PM

John had to pause several times on his way down the stairs to let policemen and forensic technicians pass on their way up. By the time he took off his coveralls and exited the house into the chilly Brixton air, there was no sign of Sherlock. He looked up and down the street, still fenced off with crime tape and whirling police lights. Lestrade was still upstairs with the body. The only familiar face was Donovan, the caustic sergeant. John limped over to her.

She didn't wait for him to ask. "He's gone."

"Sherlock Holmes?"

"He just took off. He does that."

"Is he coming back?" asked John, even though he was pretty sure of the answer.

"Didn't look like it."

"Right..." John tried to get his bearings. "Sorry, where am I?"

"Brixton."

"Do you know where I could get a cab? It's just...well...my leg." He felt very stiff and awkward, brought along by Sherlock with no explanation, only to get left behind.

Donovan let out an exasperated sigh. "Try the main road." She lifted the crime tape to let him out.

"Thanks."

"You're not his friend." It was not a question, but an observation. "He doesn't have friends. So who are you?"

He turned to look at her. They evaluated each other, tried to assess how the other fit into the enigma that was Sherlock Holmes. "I'm nobody. I just met him."

"A bit of advice then. Stay away from that guy."

"Why?"

"You know why he's here?"

John didn't answer. Didn't shake his head. Just let her talk.

"He's not paid or anything. He likes it. He gets off on it. The weirder the crime, the more he gets off. And you know what?" Donovan didn't seem concerned for John, just eager to talk about Sherlock. "One day, just showing up won't be enough. One day we'll be standing around a body and Sherlock Holmes will be the one that put it there."

"Why would he do that?"

"Because he's a psychopath," she said matter-of-factly. "Psychopaths get bored."

“Donovan!” yelled Lestrade from the house, beckoning her inside.

“Coming!” she called back. She turned and walked away from John. “Stay away from Sherlock Holmes,” she called over her shoulder, by way of goodbye. After a moment, John turned toward the high street, where he could see traffic passing. He had not gone half a block when he heard a phone ringing and, looking round, saw a red phone box.

He ignored it and walked on. It was going to be an hour before he got home at this rate.

The high street was bright and busy. Crowds of folks were still out and about. “Taxi!” called John, throwing up his arm. “Taxi!” But the taxi swept by, even though its light was on. John sighed and started to make his way towards a corner to try again.

A noise made him pause. A phone in a takeaway chicken place was ringing, but it stopped just before a staff member could pick it up.

Odd, thought John. When the next phone box that he walked by started ringing as well, he let himself into the box. “Hello?”

“There is a security camera on the building to your left. Do you see it?” It was a man’s voice, a calm, low BBC accent.

“Who is this? Who’s speaking?”

“Do you see the camera, Dr Watson?”

John looked up into the dark eye of the camera, suspended from the corner of the bank across the street. “Yeah, I see it.”

“Watch.”

The camera panned to its left, away from John. The man on the phone spoke. “There is another camera on the building opposite you. Do you see it?” This camera was also swivelling in the opposite direction. The man on the phone didn’t wait for John to reply. “And finally, at the top of the building on your right.” John looked up and right and saw the camera’s red light for just a moment before it twisted away.

“How are you doing this?” asked John.

“Get into the car, Dr Watson.” On cue, a dark sedan pulled up on the curb next to the phone booth. “I would make some sort of threat, but I’m sure your situation is quite clear to you.” The phone clicked.

John found himself in the backseat next to a stunning woman who was texting on her Blackberry, and took no notice of him. The suit that was driving said nothing. “Hello,” said John to the woman.

“Hi.” She did not look at him.

“What’s your name, then?”

“Umm...Anthea.”

“Is that your real name?”

She looked at him, finally, and smiled apologetically. “No.”

“I’m John.”

“Yes. I know.”

“Any point in asking where I’m going?”

She somehow managed to be both perfectly polite and perfectly dismissive. “None at all...John.”

“Okay.”

They drove in silence for almost a quarter of an hour. John, who had only known the London around St. Bart’s when he was a student, would not have had any idea where he was even if he’d started out in a familiar area, which, of course, he hadn’t. It was one of the reasons he loved London—rabbit-warren London of teeming millions, London built on top of a thousand years of Roman soldiers and plague pits and Victorian broughams, London that he could spend the rest of his life exploring and still never see all of it—but just at the moment, it was a bit inconvenient.

The sedan pulled into a warehouse that was one of many warehouses along that road. The tires whished over the concrete floor that was, for some reason, wet and puddled. As the car pulled to a stop, John waited a moment for Anthea to tell him what was next, but she continued texting and didn’t look at him. Finally he exited the car and, ignoring the restaurant equipment stored in chain link cages, limped towards the tall man in a suit who was leaning on an umbrella. The car left its lights on and engine running.

“Have a seat, John,” said the man, gesturing to the chair in front of him. It was the sort of padded-yet-still-uncomfortable chair you see in doctors’ waiting rooms and government offices.

“You know,” said John, not sitting, “I’ve got a phone. It was very clever, and all that, but you could just phone me. On my phone.”

“When one is avoiding the attention of Sherlock Holmes, one learns to be discreet. Hence this place. Your leg must be hurting you. Sit down.”

“I don’t want to sit down.” Mostly he wanted to get to the bloody point, and to figure out what this had to do with the man who wasn’t even his flatmate yet.

“You don’t seem very afraid.”

“You don’t seem very frightening.”

The man threw back his head and laughed. “Oh, yes. The bravery of the soldier. Bravery’s by far the kindest word for stupidity, don’t you think?”

John said nothing.

“What is your connection to Sherlock Holmes?”

“I don’t have one. I barely know him. I met him yesterday.”

“And since yesterday, you’ve moved in with him and now you’re solving crimes together. Are we to expect a happy announcement by the end of the week?”

“Who are you?”

“An interested party.”

“Interested in Sherlock? Why? I’m guessing you’re not friends.”

“You’ve met him. How many friends do you imagine he has? I’m the closest thing to a friend that Sherlock Holmes is capable of having.”

“And what’s that?”

“An enemy.”

“An enemy?”

“In his mind, certainly. If you were to ask him, he’d probably say his arch-enemy. He does love to be dramatic.”

“Well,” said John dryly, “thank God you’re above all that.” His phone beeped at him and he pulled it out. Text message.

Baker Street. Come at once if convenient. –SH.

“I hope I’m not distracting you?”

“Not distracting me at all.” He put his phone back in his pocket.

“Do you plan to continue your association with Sherlock Holmes?”

John felt his temper rising, but he kept his face impassive. “I could be wrong,” he said, “but I think that’s none of your business.”

“It could be.”

“It really couldn’t.”

“If you do move into, uh,”—the man pulled a slip of paper out of the inner pocket of his jacket and consulted it—“Two hundred and twenty-one B Baker Street? I’d be happy to pay you a meaningful sum of money on a regular basis to ease your way.”

John felt his insides quieten, the way they always did when he was getting close to the centre of the matter. “Why?”

“Because you’re not a wealthy man.”

“In exchange for what?”

“Information. Nothing indiscreet. Nothing you’d feel uncomfortable with. Just tell me what he’s up to.”

“Why.”

The man’s face was impassive. “I worry about him. Constantly.”

“That’s nice of you.”

“But I would prefer, for various reasons, that my concern go unmentioned. We have what you might call a difficult relationship.”

John’s phone chimed again with another text.

If inconvenient, come anyway. –SH.

John took a moment to mark the text as read and replace the phone in his pocket. “No.”

“I haven’t mentioned a figure.”

“Don’t bother.”

“You’re very loyal, very quickly.”

“No, I’m not, I’m just not interested.” Spy on a man he’d just met? Spy on a man who could read his whole life in twenty seconds? If Sherlock couldn’t pick up on the sort of duplicity that this man was proposing, thought John, nobody could.

But it was more than that. It was that frankness and honesty had been bred into him as a doctor, and as a soldier, and the one thing he’d always been able to do was talk to his patients about what had happened to them and what the prognosis was. It was the frankness he’d appreciated from his doctors when he’d been hurt. Even before the Army, if John was anything, he’d always been straightforward. He didn’t know how to exist in the world otherwise.

And Sherlock, who as far as John could tell was both superhumanly perceptive and a superhumanly arrogant berk, didn’t strike John as a liar. Many other things, yes—rude and messy and conceited and possibly a little mad—but whatever he was, he was honest about it. He had not hacked into security cameras or kidnapped John or brought him to a warehouse in the middle of industrial London.

Not that any of that was this man’s business.

The man studied John for a long moment. Then he pulled a notebook out of his inner pocket. A notebook that looked horrifyingly familiar to John. “‘Trust issues,’ it says here.”

John swallowed. His voice came out sounding almost, but not quite, normal. “What’s that?”

“Could it be that you’ve decided to trust Sherlock Holmes, of all people?”

“Who says I trust him?”

“You don’t seem the kind to make friends easily—“

“Are we done?” John had had enough of this calm, collected man with the slippery voice and his nonchalant invasion of cameras and privacy. If this man had access to John’s therapist’s private notes

about their sessions—John squashed that line of thought. He was not going to let this man into his head. Let the man conduct his own investigation into Sherlock’s affairs. He clearly didn’t need John’s help.

The slippery man looked at John. “You tell me.”

John looked back, trying to figure out if that was a dismissal or a test. Finally he turned to go.

“I imagine people have already warned you to stay away from him, but I can see from your left hand that’s not going to happen.”

John stopped walking. Of course they weren’t done. No, the slippery man had to get in the final word. And what was it lately with everyone making minute observations about his demeanour and using it to predict the whole bloody future?

Blast it. He turned round. “My what?”

“Show me.”

John’s desire for an explanation fought with his extreme aversion to doing anything this man asked him to do. But he raised his left hand for the man to see.

In three strides the slippery man closed the distance between him and John and reached out to grab John’s hand. “Don’t,” John snapped, pulling his hand back. The man raised his eyebrows. John steadied himself and held his hand out again, unconsciously straightening the rest of his body to stand at military attention. The man took John’s hand in his, turning it over, inspecting it. “Remarkable.”

John pulled his hand away and stepped back. “What is?”

“Most people blunder round this city, and all they see are streets and shops and cars. When you walk with Sherlock Holmes, you see the battlefield. You’ve seen it already, haven’t you?”

“What’s wrong with my hand?”

“You have an intermittent tremor in your left hand. Your therapist thinks it’s post-traumatic stress disorder. She thinks you’re haunted by memories of your military service.”

John’s whole body was rigid, which was maybe a good thing, because otherwise he was about to punch this man in the face. “Who the hell are you?” He swallowed. Forced his voice to calm down. “How do you know that?”

“Fire her. She’s got it the wrong way round. You’re under stress right now and your hand is perfectly steady. You’re not haunted by the war, Dr. Watson...you miss it.”

John said nothing. He wanted the man to shut up.

The man leaned forward. “Welcome back,” he whispered, and then walked away, spinning his umbrella. “Time to choose a side, Dr. Watson,” he called, disappearing in between the crates.

John heard Anthea’s high heels on the concrete behind him. “I’m to take you home.” John did not turn round right away. He took a moment to look at the third text he had just received.

Could be dangerous. –SH.

“Address?” asked Anthea.

Time to choose a side, indeed. “Baker Street. 221B Baker Street. But I need to stop off somewhere first.”

JANUARY 30TH

9:49PM

“Listen,” said John to Anthea, when they pulled up in front of 221B forty minutes later. This car ride, unlike the previous one, had been silent. Anthea had texted away (or wrote her novel, or whatever it was she was doing) and John had watched London slide past, thinking. Feeling the bulk of his handgun between the small of his back and the car seat, and wondering if it had been paranoid to ask Anthea to stop at his rooms so he could retrieve it. “Your boss. Any chance you could not tell him this is where I went?”

“Sure.”

“You’ve told him already, haven’t you.”

She gave him an apologetic smile. “Yeah.”

John opened the door to get out, then decided he might as well. “Hey, um, do you ever get any free time?”

She gave him a low chuckle, still looking at her phone. “Oh yeah. Lots.” When John didn’t move, she looked up at him. “Bye.”

“Okay,” he muttered, and climbed out.

John only stood on the pavement long enough to give a quick glance up and down the block. The impossible flatmate, an impossible suicide, and this impossibly beautiful girl. The kidnapper who was probably still watching him. He didn’t understand any of it. Right now, all he was hoping for was to wake up in the morning and not discover that the whole night had evaporated.

Mrs Hudson let him into the building, and when he let himself into the flat, he was surprised to see Sherlock stretched full-length on the couch, fully clothed, looking tense and glassy-eyed. John eyed the shiny flesh-coloured stickers on his forearm. “What are you doing?”

“Nicotine patch. Helps me think. Impossible to sustain a smoking habit in London these days. Bad news for brainwork.”

“Good news for breathing.”

Sherlock scoffed. “Breathing? Breathing’s boring.”

“Is that three patches?”

“It’s a three-patch problem.” Sherlock placed his fingertips together under his chin and closed his eyes. He looked like he was praying. In a coffin.

“You asked me to come?” John reminded him. “I’m assuming it’s important.”

Sherlock’s eyes snapped open. “Oh, yeah, of course. Can I borrow your phone?”

“My phone?”

“Don’t want to use mine. Always a chance the number will be recognized. It’s on the website.”

John thought that Sherlock must be the only person he’d ever met with the ability to deepen confusion by answering questions. “Mrs Hudson’s got a phone.”

“She’s downstairs. I tried shouting but she didn’t hear.”

“I was on the other side of London!”

“There was no hurry.”

John could already tell that living with Sherlock would teach him how to pick his battles. He swallowed the protests rising in his throat and handed Sherlock his phone. He waited a moment for thanks, but none were forthcoming. “So is this about the case?”

“Her case?”

“Her case?”

“Her suitcase, yes, obviously. The murderer took her suitcase. First big mistake.”

“Okay, he took her case. So?”

“It’s no use. There’s no other way. We’ll have to risk it,” said Sherlock, in response to some inner line of thought. He held the phone out to John. “On my desk, there’s a number. I want you to send a text.”

Well, of course he did. “You brought me here to send a text.”

“Text. Yes. The number on my desk.”

John took the phone but instead of going to the desk, crossed the room to the window and looked out. Baker Street was deserted.

Sherlock had followed his movement by the sound. “What’s wrong?”

“I just met a friend of yours.”

For the first time, Sherlock seemed genuinely confused. “A friend?”

“An enemy.”

The bewilderment went out of Sherlock’s voice. “Oh. Which one?”

“Your arch-enemy, according to him. Do people have arch-enemies?”

Sherlock’s voice dropped. “Did he offer you money to spy on me?”

“Yes.”

“Did you take it?”

“No.”

“Pity. We could have split the fee. Think it through next time.”

John couldn’t help but smile a little at that. “Who is he?”

“The most dangerous man you’ve ever met and not my problem right now. On my desk. The

number.”

“Jennifer Wilson?” asked John, looking at the slip of paper. “That was—hang on. Wasn’t that the dead woman?”

“Yes. That’s not important. Just enter the number.” Sherlock closed his eyes in thought. “Are you doing it?”

“Yes.”

“Have you done it?”

“Hang on,” said John, exasperated.

“These words exactly,” said Sherlock, as though he had not heard. “What happened at Lauriston Gardens? I must have blacked out. 22 Northumberland Street. Please come.”

“You blacked out?”

“What? No.” Sherlock sighed, then got up off the couch, crossing the room in the most expedient way possible, which happened to be over the coffee table. “Type and send it. Quickly.” He went into the kitchen and pulled the pink suitcase off the kitchen chair, sat in a chair in front of the fireplace and threw the suitcase open in front of him. “Have you sent it?”

“What’s the address?” asked John, typing.

“22 Northumberland Street. Hurry up.”

At the sound of Sherlock unzipping the case, John hit send and turned around to see what Sherlock was doing. The wild pink of the case matched the dead woman’s trench coat. “That’s...that’s the pink lady’s case. That’s Jennifer Wilson’s case.”

“Yes, obviously.”

John stared.

Sherlock rolled not just his eyes, but almost his whole body. “Perhaps I should mention—I didn’t kill her?”

“I never said you did.”

“Why not? Given the text I just had you send and the fact that I have her case, it’s a perfectly logical assumption.”

“Do people usually assume you’re the murderer?”

Sherlock half-smiled. “Now and then, yes.”

John moved to the other armchair across from Sherlock. The case lay open between them. “How did you get this?”

“By looking.”

“Where?”

“The killer must have driven her to Lauriston Gardens. He could only keep her case by accident if he was in a car. Nobody could be seen with this case without drawing attention to themselves, particularly a man, which is statistically more likely. So obviously, he would feel compelled to get rid of it the moment he noticed he still had it. It wouldn’t have taken him five minutes to realize his mistake.

“I checked every back street wide enough for a car five minutes from Lauriston Gardens. And anywhere you could dispose of a bulky object without being observed. Took me less than an hour to find the right skip.”

“You got all that because you realized the case would be pink?”

“Well, it had to be pink, obviously.”

“Why didn’t I think of that,” muttered John, mostly to himself.

“Because you’re an idiot.” Sherlock waved off John’s facial expression. “Don’t be like that. Practically everyone is.” He didn’t want the subject to change. He put his attention back on the case. “Now, look. Do you see what’s missing?”

“From the case? How could I?”

“Her phone. Where’s her mobile phone? There was no phone on the body, there’s no phone in the case. We know she had one, that’s her number there, you just texted it.”

“Maybe she left it at home.”

“She has a string of lovers and she’s careful about it. She never leaves her phone at home.”

Realization started to dawn. “Wait, why did I just send that text?”

“Well,” said Sherlock indirectly, “the question is, where is her phone now?”

“She could have lost it.”

“Yes. Or...”

“...the murderer. You think the murderer has the phone.”

“Maybe she left it when she left her case. Maybe he took it from her for some reason. Either way, balance probability is the murderer has her phone.”

“Sorry. What are we doing? Did I just text a murderer? What good will that do?” As if on cue, John’s mobile rang. The caller’s number was blocked.

“A few hours after his last victim and now he receives a text that can only be from her. Somebody who just found that phone, they’d ignore a text like that, but the murderer? Would panic.” He snapped the case shut and stood up, grabbing his coat.

“Have you talked to the police?”

“Four people are dead. There isn’t time to talk to the police.”

“So why are you talking to me?”

“Mrs Hudson took my skull.”

“So I’m basically filling in for your skull?”

“Relax, you’re doing fine. Well?”

“Well what?”

“Well, you could just sit there and watch telly.”

“You want me to come with you?”

“I like company when I go out. I think better when I talk aloud. The skull just attracts attention.”

John couldn’t help it. He half-smiled at that. But he still didn’t move.

“Problem?” asked Sherlock, pulling on his scarf.

“Yeah. Sergeant Donovan.”

“What about her?”

“She said you get off on this. You enjoy it.”

“And I said ‘dangerous.’ And here you are.” Without another word, he clattered down the stairs.

John was already pushing himself up with his cane, cursing to himself.

JANUARY 30TH

10:01 PM

Sherlock was waiting for him on the pavement. “Where are we going?” asked John, as they crossed the street and headed up the block.

“Northumberland Street’s a five minute walk from here.”

“You think he’s stupid enough to go there?”

“No, I think he’s brilliant enough. I love the brilliant ones, they’re always so desperate to get caught.”

“Why?”

“Appreciation, applause, at long last the spotlight. That’s the frailty of genius, John. It needs an audience.”

John decided he didn’t know Sherlock well enough yet to respond to that in the manner it deserved.

“This is his hunting ground,” continued Sherlock. “Right here in the heart of the city. Now that we know his victims were abducted, that changes everything. Because *all* his victims disappeared from busy streets, crowded places. But nobody saw anything.” The answer was right in front of his face, Sherlock knew it was, but he couldn’t yet see it and that frustrated him. “Think! Who do we trust, even though we don’t know them? Who passes unnoticed wherever they go? Who hunts in the middle of a crowd?”

“I dunno,” said John. “Who?”

“Haven’t the faintest. Hungry?” He opened the door to a small café with a big bay window and naugehyde seating. A man came out from behind the bar and gestured to an empty table. “Thank you, Billy,” said Sherlock, removing his coat and sitting in front of the window. He gestured across the street. “22 Northumberland Street. Keep your eyes on it.”

“He isn’t just going to ring the doorbell though, is he? He’d need to be mad.”

“He *has* killed four people.”

The owner of the shop was a big bloke with a scraggly ponytail, a beard, and a pot belly. John thought he looked more the sort to be driving a bus than running a restaurant. “Sherlock!” he said with a smile, shaking hands and putting menus on the table. “Anythin on the menu, whatever you want. Free! On the house for you, and for your date.”

“Do you want to eat?” Sherlock asked John.

John did a double take. “I’m not his date.”

The owner paid no attention. “This man got me off a murder charge!”

“This is Angelo.” It took John a beat to realize he was being introduced, as Sherlock wasn’t looking at either of them, but was staring out the window at Number 22. “Three years ago I successfully proved to Lestrade that at the time of a particularly vicious triple murder that Angelo was in a completely different part of town, housebreaking.”

“He cleared my name!”

“I cleared it a bit. Nothing happening opposite?”

“Nuffin.” He turned back to John. “But for this man, I go to prison.”

“You did go to prison.”

“I’ll get a candle for the table. It’s more romantic.”

“I’m not his date,” said John, uselessly.

Sherlock pushed away the menu. “You may as well eat. We may have a long wait.”

Angelo placed a small votive candle on the centre of the table and gave a little bow.

John decided that if Sherlock could hijack conversations without explanation, he could as well.

“People don’t have arch enemies.”

Sherlock did not look away from Number 22. “Sorry?”

“In real life. There are no arch enemies in real life. It doesn’t happen.”

“Doesn’t it? Sounds a bit dull.”

“So who did I meet?”

“What do real people have, then, in their real lives?”

“Friends. People they know, people they like, people they don’t like. Girlfriends, boyfriends...”

“Yes. As I was saying—dull.”

“You don’t have a girlfriend, then?”

“Girlfriend? No. Not really my area.”

“Ah, right...do you have a boyfriend? Which is fine, by the way?”

Sherlock looked at John for the first time since they’d entered the shop, his eyes calm and flat. “I know it’s fine.”

“So you’ve got a boyfriend?”

“No.”

“Right. Okay. You’re unattached. Just like me. Right. Good.” He was starting to realize that conversation that would, with anyone else, be normal and shallow somehow became supremely awkward with Sherlock. He pitied whoever it was who went on dates with this man. If anyone did.

A thought seemed to have occurred to Sherlock. “John, um...I think you should know that I consider myself married to my work. And while I’m flattered by your interest, I’m really--“

John shook his head vehemently to cut him off. “No. I’m not...Not asking...No. I’m just saying. It’s all fine.”

Sherlock examined him for a moment. “Good.” He resumed his vigil of the street outside. “Thank you.” Suddenly his eyes focused. “Look across the street. The taxi. Stopped. Nobody getting in. Nobody getting out. Why a taxi?...Oh that’s clever. Is it clever? Why is it clever?”

John had turned round to look too. “That’s it?”

“Don’t stare.”

“You’re staring.”

“We can’t both stare.” He grabbed his coat and was out the door.

Standing on the pavement, Sherlock could see in the rear window of the cab at the man who was looking at the door of Number 22. Then, as he watched, the passenger turned round and looked straight at Sherlock.

They made eye contact.

The man turned around and the taxi began to drive away.

Sherlock bolted after the cab and was almost flattened by a sedan driving down the street. He rolled off the bonnet and continued running, John following, as the cab disappeared.

“I’ve got the cab number,” said John, out of breath.

“Good for you,” said Sherlock shortly, his eyes shut. “Right turn, one way, road work, traffic light, bus lane, pedestrian crossing, left turn only, traffic light.” He opened his eyes. He knew where the cab was. He knew where it would be in less than a minute. He knew how to beat the cab there. Not a second to spare. He bolted down the street and into a block of flats, shouldering a bloke out of the way. John ran after him, calling out a hurried apology to the bloke as he did so.

Up the stairs. Onto the roof. Sherlock leapt from one building to the next, John hard on his heels. Until he wasn’t. Until he realized that with one wrong jump, he would drop six stories to land on the pavement.

“Come on, John! We’re losing him!”

If he didn’t jump, Sherlock would leave him behind. For the third time that night. He jumped, landed, raced after Sherlock down the fire escape. Into an alley. Down the street. Past a bank, closed at this hour. Quick left turn onto another street. Right down an alley in the middle of the block, and into the street where he was almost flattened—again—but this time by the cab, which came to an abrupt halt.

“Police!” cried Sherlock, holding up a warrant card. “Open her up.” He threw open the passenger door and looked at the man in the back of the cab, who looked back at him, curious and

bewildered. One look and Sherlock knew it was wrong. “No, no,” he panted. “Teeth, tan, what? Californian? LA? Santa Monica, just arrived?”

“How could you possibly—“ gasped John, catching his breath.

“The luggage.” Sherlock gestured at the baggage claim tags still on the suitcases on the floor of the cab. “Probably your first trip to London, right? Going by your final destination and the route the cabbie was taking you?”

“Sorry...are you guys the police?” asked the tourist, bewildered.

“Yeah.” Sherlock flashed the card again. “Everything all right?”

“Yeah.”

“Welcome to London.” Sherlock started walking away.

“Any problems, just let us know.” John nodded at him, then closed the cab door and followed Sherlock. “Basically just a cab that had to slow down?”

“Basically.”

“Not the murderer.”

“Not the murderer, no.”

“Wrong country. Good alibi.”

“As they go.”

“Where did you get this?” John reached for the Scotland Yard warrant card. “Detective Inspector Lestrade?”

“I pickpocket him when he’s annoying. You can keep that one, I’ve got plenty at the flat.”

John chuckled.

“What?”

“Nothing,” smiled John. “Just...welcome to London.”

Down at the other end of the block, the American tourist was talking to an actual constable and gesturing down the block towards John and Sherlock.

“Got your breath back?” asked Sherlock.

“Ready when you are.” It was just a short run back to 221B.

JANUARY 30TH

10:26PM

“That,” said John, collapsing against the wall in the entry hall of 221 and panting for breath, “was the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever done.”

Sherlock paused on the lower step and leaned against the wall as well. He was giggling in between breaths. “You invaded Afghanistan.”

John laughed. “That wasn’t just me.” They both laughed. “Why aren’t we back at the restaurant?”

Sherlock waved a hand dismissively. “They can keep an eye on it. It was a long shot anyway.”

“So what were we doing there?”

“Oh, just passing the time. And proving a point.”

“What point?”

“You.” He raised his voice. “Mrs Hudson! Dr. Watson will take the room upstairs.”

“Says who?”

“Says the man at the door,” said Sherlock, just as somebody knocked.

John answered the door. It was Angelo, the big bloke from the restaurant. “Sherlock texted me. He said you forgot this.” He held out John’s cane.

John realized that while Sherlock had been searching for pink suitcases and laying traps for murderers, some corner of his brain had also been thinking on John. And that he’d solved the problem of John’s leg in less than twenty minutes. “Um...thank you.” John took the cane from Angelo with a vague sense of surprise that he didn’t feel angry or resentful at Sherlock’s manipulation. Just a flicker of defensive anger that evaporated almost as it appeared. It was manipulation, yes. But it was skilfully done. And subtly. And had better results than what he and Ella Thompson had been trying to do for months. It was invasive and presumptuous, but it wasn’t like the slippery man in the warehouse, who read John’s hands and his therapist’s notes with barely concealed mockery. That had left him feeling like he’d swallowed spiders. This...

He should feel angry, he told himself. Sherlock had basically performed a scientific experiment on him. But instead he felt...relief, he realized. And gratitude. He felt lighter. He smiled at Angelo. “Thank you.”

Mrs Hudson came bustling out of her flat. “Sherlock,” she cried, sounding anxious, “what have you done?”

“Mrs Hudson?”

“Upstairs.” John and Sherlock cast mystified glances at each other, then took to the stairs, two at

a time.

They found Inspector Lestrade sitting in Sherlock's armchair and half a dozen police officers searching the flat.

"What are you doing?" demanded Sherlock.

"Well I knew you'd find the case. I'm not stupid," said Lestrade

"But you can't just break into my flat."

"*You* can't withhold evidence. And I didn't break into your flat."

"What do you call this, then?"

Lestrade shrugged. "It's a drugs bust."

John almost laughed. "Seriously? This guy, a junkie? Have you met him?"

"John—" said Sherlock in a low voice.

"I'm pretty sure you could search this flat all day and you wouldn't find anything you could call 'recreational.'"

"John, you probably want to shut up now," hissed Sherlock.

"Yeah, but come on," John looked at Sherlock and held his gaze. "No."

"What?"

"You?"

"Shut up!" Sherlock turned back to Lestrade. "I'm not your sniffer dog!"

"No, Anderson's my sniffer dog."

Anderson waved at them from the kitchen.

"Anderson, what are you doing here on a drugs bust?" said Sherlock.

"Oh, I volunteered," Anderson assured Sherlock.

"They all did," said Lestrade. "They're not, strictly speaking, *on* the drug squad, but they're very keen."

"Are these human eyes?" asked Sgt. Donovan, stepping out of the kitchen and holding a jar.

"Put those back!" Sherlock ordered.

"They were in the microwave."

"It's an experiment."

"Keep looking, guys," called Lestrade. "Or," he said to Sherlock, "you can start helping us properly and I'll stand them down."

"This is childish," spat Sherlock, pacing.

"Well, I'm dealing with a child," muttered Lestrade. "Sherlock, this is *our* case, I'm letting you in, but you do *not* go off on your own! Clear?"

“So what, you set up a pretend drugs bust to bully me?”

“It stops being pretend if we find anything.”

“I am clean!”

“Is your flat? All of it?”

“I don’t even smoke.” He pulled back his sleeve to show the nicotine patch. Just one of them.

“Neither do I,” said Lestrade, pulling back his sleeve to show his own nicotine patch like an extended olive branch. “So let’s work together. We found Rachel.”

“Who is she?”

“Jennifer Wilson’s only daughter.”

“Her daughter...why would she write her daughter’s name? Why?”

“Never mind that,” interjected Anderson, “we found the case. According to *someone*”—here he shot a significant look at Sherlock— “the murderer has the case, and we found it in the hands of our favourite psychopath.”

Sherlock whirled on him. “I’m not a psychopath, Anderson, I’m a high-functioning sociopath. Do your research.” He turned back to Lestrade. “You need to bring Rachel in. You need to question her. *I* need to question her.”

“She’s dead.”

“Excellent. How when and why? Is there a connection there has to be?”

John couldn’t decide what was odder—the way the case was developing, or the way that, the faster Sherlock thought, the less he spoke with punctuation.

“I doubt it, since she’s been dead for fourteen years. Technically she was never alive.” Sherlock, momentarily, had no retort, so Lestrade kept talking. “Rachel was Jennifer Wilson’s still-born daughter, fourteen years ago.”

Sherlock was fumbling. “That’s...that’s not right...how...why would she do that? Why?”

“Why would she think of her daughter in her last moments?” muttered Anderson. “Yep. Sociopath. I’m seeing it now.”

“She didn’t think about her daughter.” Sherlock slowed down for emphasis. “She scratched her name on the floor with her *fingernails*. She was dying. It took effort. It would have *hurt*.” He began to pace.

“You said the victims all took the poison themselves,” said John. “He makes them take it. Well...maybe he, I dunno, talks to them? Maybe he used the death of her daughter somehow.”

“It was ages ago, why would she still be upset?” scoffed Sherlock. The look on John’s face, and the sudden silence as the searchers stopped rummaging through his things to stare at him, made him

realize he'd gone too far. "Not good?" he muttered quietly to John.

"A bit not good, yeah."

Sherlock barrelled forward. "Yeah but if you were dying, if you'd been murdered, in your very last few seconds, what would you say?"

"Please, God, let me live?" suggested John.

"Use your imagination."

"I don't have to," said John flatly.

Sherlock changed direction. "Yeah, but if you were clever, really clever. Jennifer Wilson, running all those lovers? She was clever. She's trying to tell us something." He paced.

Mrs Hudson entered the room. "Isn't the doorbell working? Your taxi's here, Sherlock."

"I didn't order a taxi, go away."

"Oh dear," said Mrs Hudson, surveying all the police, "they're making such a mess. What are they looking for?"

"It's a drugs bust, Mrs Hudson," said John.

"But they're just for my hip!" she cried. "They're *herbal soothers!*"

"Shut up, everybody, shut up!" cried Sherlock. "Don't move, don't speak, don't breathe, I'm trying to think. Anderson, turn your face the other way, you're putting me off."

"What? My *face* is?"

"Everybody quiet and still," said Lestrade. "Anderson, turn your back."

"Oh, for God's sake--!"

"Your back, now! Please!"

"Come on, think, quick..." Sherlock was still pacing and muttering, trying to shut everything out.

"But what about your taxi?" asked Mrs Hudson fretfully.

"*MRS HUDSON!*" roared Sherlock, and she fled the room. Sherlock, suddenly, went quite still, like a pointer dog who'd located his quarry. "Oh." He smiled slowly. "Ohh...she was clever, clever, yes! She's cleverer than you lot and she's dead! Do you see, do you get it? She didn't *lose* her phone, she never lost it, she *planted* it on him! When she got out of the car, she knew that she was going to her death. She left the phone in order to lead us to her killer."

"But how?" asked Lestrade.

"What..." Sherlock stopped short. "What do you mean how? Rachel!" He looked positively giddy. "Don't you see? Rachel!" He looked round at the blank stares he was getting. "Look at you lot, you're all so vacant. Is it nice, not being me? It must be so relaxing. *Rachel is not a name.*"

“Then what is it?” asked John sharply.

“John. On the luggage, there’s a label. Email address.” He sat at his laptop as John fumbled at the luggage tag.

“Jenny dot pink at me phone dot org dot uk.”

“I’ve been too slow,” Sherlock thought out loud. “She didn’t have a laptop which means she did her business on her phone so it’s a Smartphone, it’s email-enabled. So there was a website for her account. Her username is her email address, and altogether now, the password is…”

“…Rachel,” finished John.

“So we can read her email, so what?” asked Anderson.

“Anderson, don’t talk out loud, you lower the IQ of the whole street. We can do much more than just read her emails. It’s a Smartphone, it’s got GPS. Which means if you lose it, you can locate it online. She’s leading us directly to the man who killed her.”

“Unless he got rid of it,” said Lestrade, looking over Sherlock’s shoulder.

“We know he didn’t,” said John in a low voice.

“Mrs Hudson came back up the stairs. “Sherlock, dear, this taxi driver—“

“Mrs Hudson, isn’t it time for your evening soother?” Sherlock crossed the room to Lestrade. “Get vehicles. Get a helicopter. We’re going to have to move fast, this phone battery won’t last forever.”

“But we’ll just have a map reference, not a—“

“It’s a start—“

“Sherlock…” John had sat down at the computer and was watching the map zero in on London.

“—it narrows it down from just anyone in London. This is the first proper lead we’ve had.”

“Sherlock?” John said louder.

“Where is it, quickly? Where?” Sherlock looked over John’s shoulder.

“Here. It’s in 221 Baker Street.”

“How could it be here?” asked Sherlock. “How?”

“Maybe it was in the case when you brought back, and it fell out somewhere,” suggested Lestrade.

“Oh, and I didn’t notice it? Me?” He spun round. “I didn’t notice?”

“Anyway,” said John, “we texted him and he called back.”

“Guys,” called Lestrade to the searchers, “we’re also looking for a mobile here somewhere…”

Sherlock stood rotating slowly on the spot and staring into middle space. He no longer heard Lestrade or John. No longer saw Mrs Hudson hovering in the doorway. Instead, he could see the victims. On the street. The last place anybody saw them. Jeffrey Patterson, getting off the train at

Victoria. Who passes unnoticed, wherever they go...? James Phillimore, running through the rain. Who do we trust, even when we don't know them...? Who would Jennifer Wilson have seen first, when she arrived into town from Cardiff...?

Who hunts in the middle of a crowd?

His phone beeped with a text, but he didn't need it. He knew. And he would have followed the cabbie who was lurking on the landing behind Mrs Hudson with or without the text that said **Come with me.**

"Sherlock?" said John, from what seemed like a very long way away, "You okay?"

"What? Yeah, yeah. I'm fine."

"So how can the phone be here?"

"Dunno."

"I'll try it again," said John, turning back to the GPS software.

"Good idea," said Sherlock absently, moving toward the door.

"Hey," said John, "Where are you going?"

"Fresh air," said Sherlock without turning round. "Just popping outside for a moment. Won't be long."

"Are you sure you're all right?" John called after him.

"I'm fine." And he was gone.

JANUARY 30TH

10:38PM

The cabbie was leaning against his taxi, waiting. “Taxi for Sherlock Holmes?”

Sherlock studied him. “I didn’t order a taxi.”

“Doesn’t mean you don’t need one.”

“You’re the cabbie. The one who stopped outside Northumberland Street. It was you. Not your passenger.”

“See? No one ever thinks about the cabbie. It’s like you’re invisible. Just the back of an ‘ead. Proper advantage for a serial killer.”

“Is this a confession?”

“Oh, yeah. I’ll tell you what else. If you call the coppers now, I won’t run. I’ll sit quiet and they can take me down. I promise.”

“Why?”

“Cos you’re not gonna do that.”

“Am I not?”

“I didn’t kill those four people, Mr Holmes. I spoke to em. And they killed themselves. And if you get the coppers now, I promise you one thing—I will never tell you what I said.” He started to get into his cab.

“No one else will die, though, and I believe they call that a result,” said Sherlock.

“And you won’t ever understand how those people died. What kind of result do you care about?”

Sherlock cared, of course. Cared more than anything. It was an itch he couldn’t not scratch. If the cabbie clammed up, didn’t talk, the not knowing would drive Sherlock mad.

But this was a game. And it wasn’t finished. And the only way to stay ahead of it, to stay in control, was for him, Sherlock, to stay detached, and act like he was working towards the same end as Lestrade. He bent down and leaned in the window. “If I wanted to understand...what would I do?”

“Let me take you for a ride.”

“So you can kill me too?”

“I don’t want to kill you, Mr Holmes. I’m going to talk to you. And then you’re going to kill yourself.” He sat, calmly, waiting for Sherlock to decide.

Sherlock knew that John would consider what he was about to do stupid and dangerous. So would Lestrade. But he also knew that he could keep control of himself in any situation. He was not about to kill himself, no matter what the cabbie said.

He would never kill himself.

He got in the cab.

JANUARY 30TH

10:41 PM

John, looking out the window upstairs, turned to Lestrade. “He just got in a cab. Sherlock. He just drove off in a cab.”

Sergeant Donovan was not perturbed. “I told you. He does that. Bloody left again.” She turned back to the searchers in the kitchen. “We’re wasting our time!”

“I’m calling the phone,” John said to Lestrade, his phone to his ear, “It’s ringing out.”

“If the phone is ringing, it’s not here.”

John sighed. “I’ll try the search again.”

“Does it matter?” asked Donovan. “Does any of it? He’s just a lunatic, and he’ll always let you down, and he’s wasting your time. All our time.”

Lestrade sighed. “Okay, everybody. Done here.”

JANUARY 30TH

10:43PM

“How did you find me?” Sherlock asked.

“Oh, I recognized you, soon’s I saw you chasing my cab. Sherlock Holmes. I was warned about you. I been on your website too. Brilliant stuff. Loved it.”

“Who warned you about me?” asked Sherlock.

“Someone out there who’s noticed you.”

Sherlock couldn’t help it. He leaned forward. “Who? Who would notice me?”

“You’re too modest, Mr Holmes.”

“I’m really not.”

“You’ve got yourself a fan.”

“Tell me more.”

“That’s all you’re going to know. In this lifetime.”

JANUARY 30TH

10:47PM

“Why did he do that?” asked Lestrade, pulling on his coat. “Why did he have to leave?”

John shrugged. “You know him better than I do.”

“I’ve known him for five years, and no, I don’t.” Lestrade paused to watch the “drug squad” pack up their kits and pull off their latex gloves on their way down the stairs.

“So why do you put up with him?”

“Because I’m desperate, that’s why.” Lestrade started for the door, then turned back. “And because Sherlock Holmes is a great man. And I think one day, if we’re very very lucky, he might even be a good one.”

JANUARY 30TH

10:53PM

The cab pulled to a stop. “Where are we?” asked Sherlock, looking out the window at the two stone white buildings sitting next to each other like to identical game pieces.

“You know every street in London,” said the cabbie, climbing out of the car. “You know exactly where we are.”

“Roland Kerr Further Education College,” conceded Sherlock, not getting out of the car. “Why here?”

“It’s open. Cleaners are in. One thing about being a cabbie—you always know a nice quiet spot for a murder. I’m surprised more of us don’t branch out.”

“And you just walk your victims in? How?”

The cabbie pointed a gun at him. Sherlock sighed in disappointment. “Dull.”

“Don’t worry. It gets better.”

“You can’t make people take their own lives at gunpoint.”

“I don’t. It’s much better than that.” He lowered the gun. “Don’t need this with you. ‘Cos you’ll follow me.” He walked into the school building.

JANUARY 30TH

10:56PM

Alone in the flat, John was trying to decide what to do. His right hand was aching. He paced the apartment, waiting for he didn't even know what, when the computer pinged again. Its latest search of Jennifer Wilson's GPS was done. He looked at the results.

He should call Lestrade. It wasn't his business. On the other hand...Bugger.

He snapped the laptop shut and tucked it under his arm as he ran for the door.

JANUARY 30TH

10:57PM

The cabbie showed Sherlock into a science classroom and snapped on the aging fluorescent lights. “So what do you think? It’s up to you. You’re the one who’s going to die here.”

Sherlock was growing weary with the cabbie’s clumsy attempts to intimidate him. He smiled politely. “No, I’m not.”

“That’s what they all say,” the cabbie smiled back, then gestured to a chair. “Shall we talk?”

“Bit risky, wasn’t it?” asked Sherlock, pulling off his gloves and sitting down. “Took me away under the eye of about half a dozen policemen. They’re not that stupid. And Mrs Hudson will remember you.”

“Call that a risk? Nah. *This* is a risk.” He reached into his jumper pocket and pulled out a tiny glass bottle, with a single pill inside. Sherlock studied it, his face carefully blank.

“I like this bit,” said the cabbie. “Cos you don’t get it yet, do you? But you’re about to. I just have to do this.” Next to the first jar, he placed a second, identical one. Same jar. Same pill. He never looked away from Sherlock’s face. “Weren’t expecting that, were you? Oh, you’re going to love this.”

“Love what?”

“Sherlock Holmes, look at you. Here in the flesh. That website of yours, your fan told me about it.”

“My fan?”

“You’re brilliant, you are. Proper genius. The Science of Deduction, now *that* is proper thinking. Between you and me sitting here, why can’t people think? Don’t it make you mad? Why can’t people just *think*?”

“Oh, I see,” said Sherlock, smiling. “So you’re a proper genius too.”

“Don’t look it, do I? Funny little man, driving a cab? But you’ll know better in a minute. Chances are, it’ll be the last thing you ever know.”

“Okay, two bottles. Explain.” Sherlock knew the answer by now, but he might as well keep the cabbie talking.

“There’s a good bottle and a bad bottle. You take the pill from the good bottle, you live. Take the pill from the bad bottle, you die.”

“Both bottles are, of course, identical.”

“In every way.”

“And you know which is which.”

“Course I know.”

“But I don’t.”

“Wouldn’t be a game if you knew. You’re the one who chooses.”

“Why should I? I’ve got nothing to go on. What’s in it for me?”

“I haven’t told you the best bit yet. Whatever bottle you choose, I take the pill from the other one. And then together, we take our medicine. I won’t cheat. It’s your choice. I’ll take whatever pill you don’t. Didn’t expect that, did you, Mr Holmes?”

“This is what you did to the rest of them. You gave them a choice.”

“Now I’m giving you one. You take your time. Get yourself together. I want your best game.”

“It’s not a game, it’s chance.”

“I played four times. I’m alive. That’s not chance, Mr Holmes, it’s chess. It’s a game of chess. With one move. And one survivor. This—this is the move.” And he slid the bottle on his left across the table toward Sherlock. “Did I just give you the good bottle or the bad bottle? You can choose either one.”

JANUARY 30TH

11:04PM

John nearly lost his grip on the laptop as the cab made a sharp left, trying to obey his hasty directions from the backseat. The Scotland Yard dispatcher that he had on the line was offering to connect him to Lestrade's voicemail. "No, it's an emergency," said John urgently.

"If it's an emergency, sir, I recommend you call 999 for the emergency responders."

"No, it's got to be Detective Inspector Lestrade, it's important."

"I'm sorry, sir. I can patch you through to his voicemail. Otherwise I suggest you call 999."

JANUARY 30TH

11:05PM

“You ready yet, Mr Holmes? Ready to play?”

“Play what? It’s a 50/50 chance.”

“You’re not playing the numbers, you’re playing me. Did I just give you the good pill or the bad pill. Is it a bluff? Or a double bluff? Or a triple bluff?”

“It’s still just chance.”

“Four people, in a row? It’s not chance.”

“Luck.”

“It’s genius. I know how people think. I know how people think I think. I can see it all like a map inside my head. Everyone’s so stupid, even you. Or maybe God just loves me.”

“Either way, you’re wasted as a cabbie.”

JANUARY 30TH

11:08PM

John climbed out of the cab and looked up at the two identical buildings. He couldn't see lights on in either building, and the cab that was parked in the drive was empty. He hoped Lestrade was on his way, at least, he had left a message and begged the dispatcher to get in touch with him and tell him there was a situation.

The GPS wasn't very precise. And who knew what the cabbie was doing to Sherlock. He left the laptop in the cab and yanked on the building's doors to see if they opened, and they did. Taking this as an encouraging sign, he bolted inside to start looking.

JANUARY 30TH

11:09PM

“So,” said Sherlock, not making a move towards either bottle. “You risked your life four times just to kill strangers. Why?”

“Time to play.”

“Oh, I am playing. This is my turn,” Sherlock smiled at him, his voice deceptively casual. “There’s shaving foam behind your left ear. Nobody’s pointed it out to you. Traces of where it’s happened before, so obviously you live on your own, there’s no one to tell you. But there’s a photograph of children in your cab. The children’s mother’s been cut out of the picture. If she’d died, she’d still be there. Photograph’s old, but the frame’s new. You think of your children but you don’t get to see them. Estranged father. She took the kids. But you still love them, and it still hurts.” His eyes narrowed. “Ahh, but there’s more. Your clothes. Recently laundered. But everything you’re wearing’s at least three years old. Keeping up appearances, but not planning ahead. And here you are on a kamikaze murder spree, what’s that about?” His eyes widened in recognition. “Ahh. Three years ago. Is that when they told you?”

“Told me what?”

“That you’re a dead man walking.”

“So are you.”

“You don’t have long, though. Am I right?”

The man hesitated a beat, though his facial expression still had not changed. “Aneurysm. Right here.” He tapped the upper right side of his skull. “Any breath could be my last.”

“And because you’re dying, you’ve just murdered four people?”

“I’ve *outlived* four people. That’s the most fun you can have with an aneurysm.”

“No. No, there’s something else. You didn’t just kill four people because you’re bitter. Bitterness is a paralytic. Love is a much more vicious motivator. Somehow, this is about your children.”

The cabbie nodded. “You are good, aren’t you?”

“How?”

“When I die, they won’t get much, my kids. Not a lot of money in driving cabs.”

“Or serial killing.”

“You’d be surprised.”

“Surprise me.”

“I have a sponsor.”

“You have a what?”

“For every life I take, money goes to my kids. The more I kill, the better off they’ll be. See? It’s nicer than you think.”

“Who’d sponsor a serial killer?”

“Who’d be a fan of Sherlock Holmes? You’re not the only one to enjoy a good murder. There’s others out there, just like you. Except you’re just a man. And they’re so much more than that.”

“What do you mean, more than a man? An organization, what?”

“There’s a name no one says. And I’m not going to say it either. Now, enough chatter. Time to choose.”

JANUARY 30TH

11:10PM

John gave up on being quiet in favour of being fast. He banged open classroom doors, calling for Sherlock, hoping that either Sherlock would call back or the cabbie would hear him and stop doing whatever he was doing to Sherlock.

The ground floor was empty.

So was the first floor.

John began to wonder if the police would show up in time to search the other building.

JANUARY 30TH

11:12PM

“What if I don’t choose either?” asked Sherlock. “I could just walk out of here.”

The cabbie sighed and pulled out his gun again. “You can take the 50/50 chance. Or I can shoot you in the head. Funny enough, no one’s ever gone for that option.”

Sherlock didn’t blink. “I’ll have the gun, please.”

“Are you sure?”

A small smile played around Sherlock’s mouth. “Definitely. The gun.”

“You don’t want to phone a friend?”

“The gun,” said Sherlock firmly.

The cabbie pulled the trigger.

“I know a real gun when I see one,” said Sherlock, smiling at the flame coming out of the nose of the cigarette lighter.

“None of the others did.”

“Clearly. Well, this has been very interesting. I look forward to the court case.” He got up to go.

“Just before you go,” the cabbie called after him, “Did you figure it out? Which one’s the good bottle?”

Sherlock scoffed. “Of course. Child’s play.”

“Which one then? Which one would you have picked, so I know whether I could’ve beaten you?”

Sherlock hesitated at the door.

“Come on. Play the game.”

Without speaking, Sherlock walked back to the table. Leaning over, he scooped up a bottle—the one closest to the cabbie.

“Interesting!” crowed the cabbie, satisfied. He had finally gotten Sherlock to play.

Sherlock turned the bottle over in his hand.

“So, what do you think?” asked the cabbie, holding up his own pill. “Shall we? Really, what do you think? Can you beat me? Clever enough to bet your life?”

JANUARY 30TH

11:13PM

At the back of the third floor, John burst into a long room that looked like a mess hall or a science classroom without the science equipment. The room was dark and abandoned, there was nobody in it. But now he could see, straight into the other building, through the windows shining bright with fluorescent lights. “Sherlock!” he yelled, but Sherlock’s back was to him, and the windows were closed. He could see the cabbie talking.

JANUARY 30TH

11:13PM

“I bet you get bored, don’t you? I know you do. Man like you. So clever. But what’s the point of being clever if you can’t prove it?” asked the cabbie, watching Sherlock, who was still examining the pill he’d chosen. The cabbie knew that he just needed to be given permission to do what he wanted to do anyway. “Still the addict. But this? This is what you’re really addicted to. You’d do anything, anything at all, to stop being bored. Not bored now, are ya? Innit good—“

A gunshot shattered his droning monologue, knocking the pill he’d been raising towards his mouth out of his hand. The bullet smashed the window, burst through the cabbie’s left breast and splintered into the door jamb behind. Sherlock whirled to see where the shot had come from, to see who was in the building opposite.

Nobody was there.

The cabbie lay gasping on the ground, his glasses askew. A pool of blood was creeping out from under his body.

“Was I right?” asked Sherlock, holding up the pill. “I was, wasn’t I? *Did I get it right?*”

The cabbie did not reply.

“Okay,” said Sherlock, crouching over him. “Tell me this: your sponsor. Who was it? The one who told you about me. My fan. I want a name.”

The cabbie’s voice was hoarse and laboured. “No.”

“You’re dying, but there’s still time to hurt you,” said Sherlock fiercely. “Give me a name.” And he put his shoe over the hole in the man’s chest and ground down. The man gave a strangled scream of pain. “A name! Now!”

“*Moriarty!*” screamed the man, crying. His face was contorted in agony, and then, the next moment, he was dead.

JANUARY 30TH

11:33PM

Twenty minutes later, after the arrival of the cavalry, Lestrade found Sherlock sitting in the doorway of an ambulance.

“Why have I got this blanket?” asked Sherlock. “They keep putting this blanket on me.”

“Yeah, it’s for shock.”

“I’m not in shock.”

“Yeah, but some of the guys want to take photographs.”

“So the shooter—no sign?”

“Cleared off before we got here. But a guy like that would have had enemies, I suppose, one of them could have been following him, but we’ve got nothing to go on.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t say that.”

Of course you wouldn’t, thought Lestrade. He leaned against the ambulance. “Okay. Gimme.”

“The bullet they just dug out of the wall’s from a handgun. Kill shot over that distance from that kind of a weapon? That’s a crack shot you’re looking for, but not just a marksman. A fighter. His hands couldn’t have shaken at all, so clearly he’s acclimatized to violence. He didn’t fire until I was in immediate danger, though, so strong moral principle. You’re looking for a man probably with a history of military service and...nerves of steel...” He trailed off. He had just caught sight of John, watching the excitement from the other side of the crime tape. “Actually, do you know what?” said Sherlock, “Ignore me.”

“Sorry?”

“Ignore all that. That’s just the shock talking.” He started to walk away.

“Where are you going?”

“I just need to talk about the rent.”

“I’ve still got questions!”

Sherlock kept walking. “Oh, what now! I’m in shock, look, I’ve got a blanket!”

“Sherlock!”

“*And* I just caught you a serial killer. More or less.”

Lestrade gave up. “Okay. We’ll pull you in tomorrow. Off you go.”

John was standing, unconsciously, in the military at ease posture. Sign of tension. His eyes were clear, though. “Sergeant Donovan’s just been explaining everything,” he said, as Sherlock ducked under the crime tape and threw the shock blanket in a nearby panda car. “Two pills? Dreadful business, isn’t it? Dreadful.”

“Good shot,” said Sherlock softly.

John did not take the compliment. “Yes, yes, must have been. Through that window.”

“Well, you’d know. You need to get the powder burns out of your fingers. I don’t suppose you’d serve time for this, but let’s avoid the court case.”

John cleared his throat and looked away.

“Are you all right?”

“Yes, ‘course I’m all right.”

“Well, you have just killed a man.”

“Yes, I—“ John cut himself off, looking fiercely at Sherlock. “It’s true. But,” he continued, taking a deep breath and letting his voice lighten, “he wasn’t a very nice man.”

Sherlock watched some of the tension lines in John’s body ease. Didn’t mind the killing, then, but minded the talking about it after. Sherlock nodded. “No. No, he wasn’t really, was he?”

“And, frankly, a bloody awful cabbie.”

Sherlock couldn’t help it. He laughed. “That’s true, he was a bad cabbie. You should have seen the route he took us to get here.”

John chuckled. “We can’t giggle, it’s a crime scene. Stop it.” They started to stroll towards the main street.

“You’re the one who shot him, don’t mind me.”

“Keep your voice down,” John tried to smile casually at Donovan, who was passing. “You were going to take that damn pill, weren’t you?” John stopped walking to look at him.

“Of course I wasn’t. I was biding my time. Knew you’d turn up.”

“No, you didn’t,” John smiled, then his smile faded. “It’s how you get your kicks, isn’t it? You risk your life to prove you’re clever.”

“Why would I do that?”

“Because you’re an idiot.”

Sherlock suppressed a grin. Not many people called him an idiot. “Dinner?”

“Starving.”

“End of Baker Street there’s a good Chinese, stays open ‘til two. You can always tell a good Chinese by the bottom third of the door handle.”

John spotted a man getting out of a car down the block. “Sherlock,” he said, “That’s him, that’s the man I was talking to you about.”

Sherlock looked over. “I know exactly who that is.”

“So,” said the man, as they approached. “Another case cracked. How very public-spirited. But

that's never really your motivation, is it?"

"What are you doing here?" asked Sherlock, looking past, not at, the man.

"As ever, I'm concerned about you."

"Yes, I've been hearing about your 'concern.'"

"Always so aggressive. Did it ever occur to you that you and I belong on the same side?"

"Oddly enough, no."

"We have more in common than you like to believe. This petty feud between us is simply childish. People will suffer. And you know how it always upset Mummy."

"I upset her? Me? It wasn't me that upset her, *Mycroft*."

"Wait, hang on," interrupted John. "Mummy? Who's Mummy?"

"Mother. Our mother. This is my brother, Mycroft. Putting on weight again?"

"Losing it, in fact."

"He's your brother?" asked John.

"Of course he's my brother," Sherlock said.

"So...he's not..." John stopped, feeling stupid.

"Not what?"

"I dunno. Criminal mastermind?"

"Close enough," said Sherlock.

"For goodness sake," laughed Mycroft. "I occupy a minor position in the British government."

"He *is* the British government, when he's not too busy being the British Secret Service or the CIA on a freelance basis. Good evening, Mycroft. Try not to start a war before I get home. You know what it does for the traffic." He walked away. John started to follow, then paused and turned back to Mycroft. "So...when you say you're concerned about him, you actually are concerned?"

"Yes, of course."

"It actually is a childish feud?"

"He's always been so resentful. You can imagine the Christmas dinners."

Yes. Yes he could. "Yes. I mean, no, God no." He looked at Anthea, who was still texting. "Hello again."

She smiled blankly at him. "Hello."

"Yes, we met earlier on this evening."

"Oh."

"Okay. Good night."

"Good night, Dr. Watson," said Mycroft.

“So,” said John, catching Sherlock up, “Dim sum?”

“I can always predict the fortune cookies.”

“No you can’t.”

“Almost can. You did get shot, though?”

“Sorry?”

“In Afghanistan? There was an actual wound?”

“Oh. Yeah. Shoulder.”

“Shoulder, I thought so.”

“No you didn’t.”

“The left one.”

“Lucky guess.”

“I never guess.”

“Yes, you do.”

Sherlock just smiled.

“What’re you so happy about?”

Sherlock uttered the single, intriguing word. “Moriarty.”

“What’s Moriarty?”

“Absolutely no idea.”

EPILOGUE

It took John less than half an hour in his small, grey little flat to pack everything he owned in his duffel. Toiletries from the bathroom, his RMC mug wrapped in a clean t-shirt, the extra ammunition for his pistol and a couple of medical textbooks. When he opened his laptop to turn it off, it woke up and he saw that he'd left his almost-blank blog, *The Personal Blog of Dr. John H. Watson*, open. He hadn't made any entries except under extreme duress from Ella Thompson, and everything—from the typeface to the title—was meant to keep casual internet surfers away from it.

“Nothing happens to me,” he'd written in the second entry. Well, he thought, closing the browser and telling the computer to shut down, maybe he'd update it tomorrow.

CANONICAL NOTES

Let's start with the obvious: When you pluck Sherlock Holmes out of Victoria's reign and drop him square in the middle (or, as the case may be, toward the end) of Elizabeth II's, the environment is wildly different. The cell phones and the blogs and the lack of broughams are the least of it. How can you have Holmes without his pipe, a Sherlockian asks, or without his deerstalker cap (which Cumberbatch's Sherlock wears only with great reluctance)? But to ask that is to forget a crucial point: while Holmes smoked a pipe, Canon Holmes never smoked a meerschaum—the curvy, bulbous pipe we associate with him. That came from William Gillette, one of the first actors to portray Holmes onstage, who liked the silhouette it made. And the deerstalker? From Sydney Paget, who illustrated Doyle's stories for *The Strand* magazine.

It's a dangerous thing, to mistake the props for the man.

When you read (or watch) a good Holmes pastiche, it's a treasure hunt. You look for familiar characters in an unfamiliar setting (America, for example, or Rio de Janeiro, or Morocco, or the twenty-first century), for little pieces of Arthur Conan Doyle's world littering the streets, waiting for you to pick them up. Passing mentions of gaslights and beekeeping and skilful disguises. Unexplained references to undocumented cases that are never elaborated upon. But there's more to a good pastiche than just putting the right props in the right places. There has to be that moment when you recognize Holmes, walking out of the London fog and fitting himself into a new place, into a new author's head.

Steven Moffat has said that there will never be an official novelization of Sherlock. His contention is that everyone should read the Canon. And I agree. To know the Canon makes Sherlock a whole other dimension of enjoyable and funny. So to that end, to hopefully inspire you to go read the Canon if you haven't, I've compiled a list of references I've found that the show makes to the Canon. I didn't consult the Internet (I know there are plenty of folks out there who've done stuff like this, but I wanted to make my own), except to find some quotes more quickly than I could have done by paging through my own copies of the books. I'm sure I missed some. Honestly, I've watched the series three or four times and read the Canon at least twice just in the assembling of this annotation (that is, not counting watching or reading it for pleasure, or when I was writing the adaptations themselves). And every time I watch them or read it, I find something I missed. But sooner or later I have to put this to bed and call it done.

The Sherlock Holmes Canon is more than the sum of its parts. It's not as important to know the number of times that Holmes says some variation of, "When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth" as it is to know that he said it and what that means about him as a man. But, that said, I went ahead and made the list anyway.

Generally speaking, if I talk about Sherlock or John, I'm referring to Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman's portrayals, or to the BBC *Sherlock* series. If I say Holmes or Watson, I'm referring to the Canon (or, occasionally, to other adaptations, like the Granada television series starring Jeremy Brett).

And finally, an alert from the Federal Department of Obviousness: Here there be spoilers. Lots and lots of spoilers. Canon-spoilers and *Sherlock*-spoilers. If you don't mind spoilers and you haven't read the Canon, I'm hoping that this catalogue pushes you in that direction (of Canon-reading, I mean). If you *do* mind spoilers, and you *haven't* read the Canon, by all means, go read that first. (And don't just read *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and "The Adventure of the Speckled Band." There's so much more to Holmes than the stories that everyone knows.)

THE TITLE

"A Study in Pink" is a reference to the first Holmes story ever published, in 1887, called *A Study in Scarlet*. The quote, which Holmes says to Watson after their initial examination the body of Enoch Drebber, is "There's a scarlet thread of murder running through the colourless skein of life, and our duty is to unravel it, and isolate it, and expose every inch of it."

PROLOGUE

The series opens the same in both *Sherlock* and the Canon: we start with John Watson's military service. John is talking to his therapist, Emma Thompson. Canon Watson does make reference to his health being wrecked by his time in the Army (he suffered a bout of enteric fever, and got shot at least once, possibly twice. In both in *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four* it's clear that he's not at his physical best), but he never makes reference to having anything like what we would call post-traumatic stress. Nor would he, bluff Victorian English soldier, stiff upper lip and all that. This is not to say that people in Victorian times were unfamiliar with the phenomenon that some soldiers who came back from wars were very different people than they'd been when they left. Europeans of various nations recognized the condition as far back as the 1670s. During and after the American Civil War, it was called Soldier's Heart. In World War I and II it was shell shock, and then battle fatigue. In 1890s England, at the height of Britain's military empire, the English sent soldiers to India, and China, and South Africa, and Ireland, and some of those men returned bitter and broken, though physically uninjured. If Watson had gone to a professional, he would've called him an alienist (in "The Adventure of the Creeping Man," Watson tells Holmes that a case that's been set before him sounds more in need of an alienist than a detective). (Off topic: If you like Holmes, you might try reading *The Alienist*, by Caleb Carr, who also writes decent

Holmes pastiches.) There is a similarity between the beginnings of “A Study in Pink” vs. *A Study in Scarlet*, though, in that they both begin with John Watson, and his military career, and his need for a new life in London.

“The weather had little to no effect on his wardrobe.” In “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” Watson comments that his “time in India had trained [him] to withstand heat better than cold, and a thermometer of ninety was no hardship.” I think that—up to a certain point, anyway—John Watson’s stoicism would go in both directions, to disregard cold as well as heat, and just get on with it.

“He wasn’t a literary man...” This is an almost-quote of Neil Gaiman’s Holmes pastiche, “A Study in Emerald.” And honestly, when I wrote it, I thought Gaiman was quoting the Canon. But I re-read the Canon, and searched Google multiple times, and consulted a reference librarian, and couldn’t find it. (It doesn’t help, of course, that it’s not exactly a unique phrase.) So until someone tells me otherwise I’m going on the assumption that I’m quoting Neil Gaiman, who managed to fake Arthur Conan Doyle’s voice so thoroughly that I transplanted his words into Doyle’s.

NOVEMBER 26TH, 8:24PM

“James Phillimore turned his collar up against the rain...” James Phillimore appears in the Canon, in one of the tantalizingly brief mentions of cases which Holmes was involved in that Watson never wrote up. “The Problem of Thor Bridge” tells us that “Somewhere in the vaults of the bank of Cox & Co., at Charing Cross, there is a travel-worn and battered tin dispatch-box with my name, John H. Watson, M.D., Late Indian Army, painted upon the lid. It is crammed with papers, nearly all of which are records of cases to illustrate the curious problems which Mr. Sherlock Holmes had at various times to examine...Among these unfinished tales is that of Mr. James Phillimore, who, stepping back into his own house to get his umbrella was never more seen in this world.” Here, of course, we have James Phillimore, outside during a downpour, leaving his friend behind to get an umbrella.

JANUARY 28TH, 5:04PM

Detective Inspector Gregory Lestrade—Lestrade is the most frequently-occurring detective in the Canon who brings his “puzzlers” to Holmes. Lestrade and Holmes treat each other with alternating disdain and grudging respect. In the beginning, Holmes describes Lestrade as “the pick of a bad lot,” and criticizes him for having no imagination. He also calls him “obtuse but resolute” in “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box.” But, years later, when Holmes lays a trap for the dangerous murderer Colonel

Sebastian Moran, it's Lestrade whom he trusts to help him. Later in their careers, in the time of "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons," "it was no very unusual thing for Mr. Lestrade, of Scotland Yard, to look in upon us of an evening, and his visits were welcome to Sherlock Holmes, for they enabled him to keep in touch with all that was going on at the police headquarters. In return for the news which Lestrade would bring, Holmes was always ready to listen with attention to the details of any case upon which the detective was engaged, and was able occasionally, without any active interference, to give some hint or suggestion drawn from his own vast knowledge and experience."

This press conference scene is also consistent with Scotland Yard's and Holmes's uneven relationship with the press which, while not an uncommon theme in all kinds of stories, is also present in the Canon. Watson occasionally elaborates on the Victorian press' shoddy coverage of cases in which Holmes is involved and their inability to get facts right (this is particularly notable in *A Study in Scarlet* and "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons"); Holmes, on the other hand, trawls through reams of paper every day looking for likely cases, or to get background information on cases that he's investigating.

"Is there any chance that these are murders?" Holmes also deals with the question of murder vs. suicide in "The Case of the Resident Patient."

JANUARY 29TH, 11:07AM

"The portly man he had just walked past but not observed." A nod of my own to Holmes' famous line, from "A Scandal in Bohemia" (and elsewhere) admonishing Watson that "You see but you do not observe."

"Stamford. Mike Stamford." As in the series, Stamford (who in the Canon has no first name) is the character who introduces Holmes and Watson. Watson describes him as "a dresser under [Watson] at St. Bart's." He meets Watson at the Criterion Bar (not Russell Square Gardens) and is present during Holmes' and Watson's introductory conversation (which, incidentally, is commemorated on a plaque at the actual St. Bart's), and then wanders out of the Canon, never to be heard from again.

"Can't afford London on an Army pension." At the beginning of *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson—after running through his army pension with alarming speed—realizes "that I must either leave the metropolis and rusticate somewhere in the country, or that I must make a complete alteration in my style of living."

The quotes "You're the second person to say that to me today." "...Who was the first?" are taken almost verbatim from the Canon.

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St. Bartholomew's, the mortuary, the lab—Canon Holmes would probably never have visited a mortuary to examine bodies or experiment upon them. Holmes is much more interested in chemical experiments than he is in biological ones (Bart's, because it is a school, would have cadavers for use in anatomy classes, it is these that Holmes occasionally “beats with a stick,” as Stamford puts it). Holmes was slightly unusual and ahead of his time for performing anything approaching forensic examinations at all. As Patricia Cornwell describes forensic investigations in her book *Portrait of a Killer*, “Unless a case was obvious, there was no certainty that the manner or even cause of death would be accurate.” There was no standard checking of body temperature or ambient environmental temperatures, no way (besides the most rudimentary) of determining cause of death, no checking of liver or rigor mortis unless it was painfully obvious, no collection of hair or fibres, no fingerprint collecting, indeed, no fingerprint database. If a victim's face was damaged, their identity was ascertained by their clothing. Mortuaries were not forensic institutions; they were storage houses. Most bodies never went near a mortuary; they went straight from wherever they died to the funeral home and into the ground (and there, perhaps, to be dug back up by Messrs. Burke and Hare and sold to anatomy classes).

Molly is not a character that exists in the Canon, but the increase in official policies, bureaucracy, and procedures surrounding hospitals and schools and mortuaries in modern society makes her a necessary (and welcome) addition to Sherlock's world. Without Molly, Sherlock would have to find some scientific research initiative to attach himself to to be able to conduct experiments on dead bodies (read Mary Roach's *Stiff* for more information than you ever wanted to know about the fate of bodies, at least as the system exists in the United States). As for access to the St. Bart's lab, Sherlock has either extended his student pass (Canon Holmes was a student at Bart's, though an irregular one), forged or stolen a new one, or Molly's getting him in there, too (or Lestrade, possibly).

“*The smell of putrefaction.*” This is actually the name of one of the tracks on the soundtrack to the movie *Sherlock Holmes* (the one starring Robert Downey Jr). I believe it's also a quote from the movie's dialogue. An actual fresh body in a modern-day British mortuary wouldn't putrefy, but I couldn't resist.

“*We'll start with the riding crop.*” This scene combines a couple of Canonical elements. Stamford, when describing Holmes to Watson, describes Holmes as having “a passion for definite and exact knowledge...but it may be pushed to excess. When it comes to beating the subjects in the dissecting-rooms with a stick, it is certainly taking rather a bizarre shape.” Holmes is also known for using a riding crop as a weapon; in “A Case of Identity” he threatens a man with one. (He also uses both a cane and a

fire poker in “The Adventure of the Speckled Band.”) Additionally (and almost certainly unintentionally), Sherlock’s coat (a long trench with scarlet thread stitched into the lapels) reminds me both of “the scarlet thread of murder” referenced in *A Study in Scarlet*, as well as to a cabbie who drives Watson to a train station in “The Final Problem:” “a fellow with a heavy black cloak tipped at the collar with red.” The driver turns out to be Mycroft Holmes.

“I prefer to text.” In the Canon, Holmes sends innumerable telegrams, even after 221B Baker Street is fitted with a telephone (and, indeed, unless I’m misremembering, when the phone in 221B is used, it is Watson who uses it). In “The Adventure of the Devil’s Foot,” Watson observes that Holmes “has never been known to write where a telegram will serve.” Clients also communicate with Holmes by telegram a great deal of the time; in “The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter,” Watson comments that, “We were fairly accustomed to receive weird telegrams at Baker Street.”

“Afghanistan or Iraq?” The Canonical quote from *A Study in Scarlet* is “You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive.” As in “A Study in Pink,” Sherlock does not immediately explain the train of thought that ran him to such a conclusion.

“Potential flatmates should know the worst about each other.” Holmes and Watson also have this conversation in the Canon, although in the Canon, Watson also admits to shortcomings (in *Sherlock*, John admits to none). Holmes’ self-disclosed list of vices includes strong tobacco, the ever-present chemical experiments, and his moodiness (“Just let me alone, and I’ll soon be right.”). He also informs Watson that he plays the violin, though this is not included in his list of vices, of course. Watson says he keeps “a bull pup” (which is never mentioned again), has shaken nerves, an irregular schedule, and is “extremely lazy.” “I have another set of vices when I’m well, but those are the principal ones at present,” he tells Holmes.

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“Mrs Hudson, the landlady, is giving me a special deal...A few years back her husband got himself sentenced to death in Florida. I was able to help out.” It may be worth mentioning that there is no mention whatsoever of Mr Hudson throughout the original Canon. There are some Sherlockians who think that Mrs Hudson was married to the antagonist in “The Gloria Scott” (who was named Hudson), but the general consensus is that she’s a widow who takes in boarders for extra income.

221B Baker Street—Though Baker Street is a real street in London, 221 is not an address that exists (or, I believe, has ever existed). Sherlockian theory is that Dr. Watson (or, acting as his literary agent, Arthur Conan Doyle) invented the address to disguise the true location of Holmes’ domicile, a precaution that proved presciently necessary. Holmesians have expended considerable effort over the past hundred years canvassing Baker Street as well as old London maps, trying to place where 221 might be, or where Holmes actually lived. Modern day Baker Street is, of course, overrun with Sherlock Holmes tourist spots as well as the Sherlock Holmes Museum (which still gets mail addressed to the detective). The ubiquity of Holmesian memorabilia is one of the reasons why *Sherlock* used North Gower Street, about a mile and a half away, as its Baker Street stand-in.

“Sherlock started moving piles from the desk to the mantelpiece, displacing a case of mounted beetles and bats as he did so...[He] affixed the mail to the mantel with his penknife.” Much of the mess visible in 221B when John walks in is straight out of the Canon, though in *A Study in Scarlet*, all that is said about the rooms is that “they consisted of a couple of comfortable bedrooms and a single large airy sitting-room, cheerfully furnished, and illuminated by two broad windows.” It is not until later in the Canon that Holmes’ messiness becomes both extreme and legendary. In “The Musgrave Ritual,” Watson describes his flatmate’s habits thusly: “When I find a man who keeps his cigars in the coal-scuttle, his tobacco in the toe end of a Persian slipper, and his unanswered correspondence transfixed by a jack-knife into the very centre of his wooden mantelpiece, then I begin to give myself virtuous airs...Our chambers were always full of chemicals and of criminal relics which had a way of wandering into unlikely positions, and of turning up in the butter-dish or in even less desirable places. But his papers were my great crux. He had a horror of destroying documents, especially those which were connected with his past cases.”

I also want to note that the show’s set dressers put a pillow with the flag of Great Britain on it in John’s chair, as a nod to the character’s Army service and patriotism (as documented in both the Canon and in *Sherlock*). Also, the layout of this version of 221B Baker Street shares a striking resemblance to the one in the Granada television series starring Jeremy Brett and Edward Hardwicke/David Burke.

“Found your website. ‘The Science of Deduction.’” In the Canon, Watson comes across a monograph, published by Holmes, entitled “The Book of Life.” He reads it while waiting for his breakfast, and dismisses the central argument that “...a logician could infer the possibility of an Atlantic or a Niagara without having seen or heard of one or the other...By a man’s fingernails, by his coat-sleeve, by his boots, by his trouser-knees, by the callosities of his forefinger and thumb, by his expression, by his shirt-cuffs—by each of these things a man’s calling is plainly revealed. That all united should fail to enlighten

the competent inquirer in any case is almost inconceivable.” In the monograph, Holmes describes this whole process/philosophy as “The Science of Deduction” (hence Sherlock’s website).

“John studied him. He was reluctant to ask for explanations or act impressed.” Canon Watson is not much of a question-asker, either (though he is more candid about being impressed by Holmes’ deductions). In *A Study in Scarlet*, he never asks what Holmes does for a living, saying that “my delicacy prevented me from forcing another man to confide in me.” Eventually Holmes comes round to the subject of his livelihood on his own. It is this quality of Watson’s—the fact that he’s not a busybody along with the fact that he can be patient and wait for Holmes to explain in his own time—that perhaps endears Watson to Holmes the most. In “The Man with the Twisted Lip,” Holmes comments to Watson (after Watson finds Holmes in an opium den, and agrees without question to go with Holmes to Kent for a case, and then sits quietly in the carriage for most of a seven-mile drive without asking a single question), “You have a grand gift of silence, Watson...It makes you quite invaluable as a companion.”

“Brixton, Lauriston Gardens.” From the telegram that Holmes receives in *A Study in Scarlet*: “My dear Mr Sherlock Holmes—There has been a bad business during the night at 3, Lauriston Gardens, off the Brixton Road.” Sherlock’s casual greeting of Lestrade, his lack of surprise at the appearance of the Detective Inspector, reminds me of a similar reaction in *The Sign of Four*, when an Inspector MacDonald comes to tell Holmes of a horrific murder: “It would be an overstatement to say that [Holmes] was shocked or even excited by the amazing announcement. Without having a tinge of cruelty in his singular composition, he was undoubtedly callous from long overstimulation.” (In the show, of course, Sherlock does have a certain cruel streak in him.) Sherlock’s waiting until after Lestrade leaves before jumping up and down with glee is also familiar; in “The Adventure of the Dancing Men,” Watson says that “Holmes preserved his calm professional manner until our visitor had left us, although it was easy for me, who knew him so well, to see that he was profoundly excited.”

“I’m your landlady, dear. Not your housekeeper.” Canon Mrs Hudson doesn’t make very many “onstage” appearances; she sometimes answers the door and announces visitors, and generally makes meals for Holmes and Watson. I don’t believe she cleans for them, though Holmes’ eccentricities “sorely tried her patience” (in *Sherlock*, Una Stubbs’ Mrs Hudson occasionally reaches the limits of her tolerance and cleans Sherlock’s rooms as much as she can get away with). In the Canon, Holmes’ rent payments are “princely,” and Watson says that she’s fond of him, in spite of his many faults as a tenant.

“The game, Mrs Hudson, is on!” As far as I could find, Holmes never says this precisely; but on at least two occasions the game is described as “afoot.” In “The Adventure of the Abbey Grange,” Watson is awakened by Holmes before the sun is up, who shakes his shoulder and says, “Come, Watson, come! The game is afoot. Not a word! Into your clothes and come!” Watson (stolid, trusting bloke that he is) puts on his clothes and they’re in a cab in less than ten minutes. Watson uses the phrase again in “The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge:” “I could tell by numerous subtle signs, which might have been lost upon anyone but myself, that Holmes was on a hot scent...a subdued eagerness and suggestions of tension in his brightened eyes and brisker manner...assured me that the game was afoot.”

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“I’m a consulting detective. The only one in the world. I invented the job.” As Holmes describes it in *A Study in Scarlet*: “Here in London we have lots of government detectives and lots of private ones. When these fellows are at fault, they come to me, and I manage to put them on the right scent. They lay all the evidence before me, and I am generally able, by the help of my knowledge of the history of crime, to set them straight.” (Off topic: if I had the time or inclination, I could write a whole literary analysis of the myriad ways in which references to dogs and scents appear in the Canon.) It’s possible that Doyle originally intended Holmes to be more of an armchair detective, never leaving Baker Street (later, Mycroft, who in the Canon runs his life on metaphorical rails that never deviate, did more to fill this role; Rex Stout’s detective Nero Wolfe, who was created in the 1930s and is supposedly Mycroft Holmes’ son, refuses to leave his brownstone in New York City for his work), but abandoned this trope when he realized how limiting it would be to the characters. So Holmes evolved into a detective who interviews witnesses and gathers evidence himself, rather than waiting for it to come to him.

“When the police are out of their depth, which is always, they consult me.” Holmes’ exact description of his job, in *The Sign of Four*, goes, “I crave for mental exaltation. That is why I have chosen my own particular profession, or rather created it, for I am the only one in the world...The only unofficial consulting detective...When Gregson, or Lestrade, or Athelney Jones are out of their depths—which, by the way, is their normal state—the matter is laid before me.”

“I didn’t know, I saw.” This is similar to several things that Holmes says, including, “I never guess. It is a shocking habit.” (*The Sign of Four*) and “You see, you just do not observe,” (“A Scandal in Bohemia,” as well as being a line of dialogue in the final episode of the first series, “The Great Game”).

“*Your haircut and the way you hold yourself says military.*” In the Canon, of course, Holmes does not need to ask if Watson was in Afghanistan or Iraq, though Sherlockians have questioned why Holmes didn’t consider South Africa as a possible locale for Watson’s deployment. In 2010, British soldiers were part of coalition forces in both countries, so the clarification question was necessary. Many of the details that Sherlock notices—Watson’s complexion, his medical and military training, the plain traces of injury—are also noted by Holmes in the Canon.

“*With a psychosomatic limp? Of course you’ve got a therapist.*” Watson’s war wounds have been a great source of debate and confusion among Sherlockians. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson says he was struck in “the shoulder” by a Jezail bullet, which grazed the subclavian artery. In the next story, however, (*The Sign of Four*), Watson is nursing his “wounded leg,” and makes reference to straining it by walking all over London behind the scent dog Toby. It’s possible, of course, that Watson took two bullets in Afghanistan, and for some reason failed to mention the fact in *A Study in Scarlet*. Some hypothesize that he has some form of amnesiac PTSD that prevents him from remembering precisely where or how many times he was injured. Some point out that it’s possible that Watson was holding himself in such a way that though only one bullet hit him, it travelled through his body and struck him twice (in the shoulder and in the leg). In any case, the “migrating Jezail bullet” will probably never be fully or adequately explained.

“*Then there’s your brother. Your phone, it’s expensive.*” The Canon version of this conversation, from *The Sign of Four*, is Holmes’ examination of Watson’s pocketwatch. Both watch and phone carry an engraving; both are scratched from spending time in pockets with keys and coins; both were owned by alcoholics; both possessions came to John/Watson as gifts after being previously owned. “Look at the thousands of scratches all round the hole—marks where the key has slipped. What sober man’s key could have scored those grooves? But you will never see a drunkard’s watch without them.”

“*Unlikely you’ve got an extended family.*” In *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson says he has “neither kith nor kin in England.” In *The Sign of Four*, it’s revealed he had at least one brother—rather than a sister, as in *Sherlock*—but that he’s dead (along with Watson’s father and, presumably, his mother).

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“*Harry’s short for Harriet.*” Watson had a brother, not a sister; but the brother’s initials were also H.W. (as noted by the engraving on the pocketwatch that Holmes examines in *The Sign of Four*).

“*Hello, freak.*” Though Lestrade (both on *Sherlock* and in the Canon) treats Holmes with general—if grudging—respect, many of the other official detectives that Holmes works with over the course of his career dismiss either Holmes’ manner, or his methods, or both. In *The Sign of Four*, Athelney Jones greets him somewhat mockingly as, “Mr Sherlock Holmes, the theorist,” and thanks him for the “lucky guess” that Holmes made while assisting them on a previous case. As Watson says in *The Valley of Fear*, “Mediocrity knows nothing higher than itself; but talent instantly recognizes genius, and MacDonald [the detective in the case] had talent enough.” Anderson and Donovan, though characters not from the Canon, embody the scepticism and mutual condescension that characterizes many of Holmes’ interactions with the official forces.

“*Sherlock walked toward the house in a roundabout way, looking at the pavement as he went.*” This is in reference to Watson’s telling us that Holmes, “proceeded slowly down the path, or rather down the fringe of grass which flanked the path, keeping his eyes riveted upon the ground.” When he does enter the house, Holmes scathingly asks Gregson if “a herd of buffaloes had passed along,” so thoroughly had the Scotland Yarders trampled any evidence that might have been between the road and the house.

“*The house that they let themselves into was shabby and unfurnished, with warped floorboards and banisters worn slick and bald from the friction of thousands of hands.*” As Watson describes it in *A Study in Scarlet*, Number 3, Lauriston Gardens “wore an ill-omened and minatory look...It was a large square room, looking all the larger from the absence of all furniture. A vulgar flaring paper adorned the walls, but it was blotched in places with mildew, and here and there great strips had become detached and hung down, exposing the yellow plaster beneath.”

“*Her name’s Jennifer Wilson, according to her credit cards.*” In *Scarlet*, the victim’s name is Enoch Drebber, as identified by the business cards he’s carrying in his pocket and a monogrammed handkerchief.

“*John felt his skin go cold under his clothes.*” This is a quote from *The Sign of Four*, when Watson sees footprints that seem to implicate a child in a murder.

“*Rache’ is German for ‘revenge.*”—In *A Study in Scarlet*, the word *rache* is written on the wall of the Lauriston Gardens house in blood (the fingernails come into it as well; the murderer scratched the wallpaper a bit with his fingernails as he wrote the word). One of the Detective Inspectors in the story, Tobias Gregson, declares, “It means that the writer was going to put the female name Rachel, but was disturbed before

he or she had time to finish.” It is Holmes who points out that “‘*Rache*,’ is the German for ‘revenge’; so don’t lose your time looking for Miss Rachel.” In “A Study in Pink,” of course, it’s the Scotland Yard forensist Anderson who comes up with “German for revenge,” and Sherlock who comes up with “Rachel.”

“She’s from out of town though. Intended to stay in London for one night before returning home to Cardiff. So far so obvious.” As Holmes says in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, “The world is full of obvious things which nobody by any chance ever observes.”

“Her wedding ring is ten years old at least.” Though there is a ring involved as a clue in *A Study in Scarlet*, it does not belong to the victim.

“Back of the right leg. Tiny splash marks on the heel and cuff not present on the left. She was dragging a wheeled suitcase behind her with her right hand. You don’t get that splash pattern any other way.” Rain also figures into Holmes’ deductions in *A Study in Scarlet*; he’s able to deduce which tire tracks belonged to the cab carrying the murderer because he can tell what drove through before the rain and what drove through after. In “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” Holmes deduces the process of his client’s arrival at his door by observing the train ticket in her pocket and the splashes of mud made by a dog-cart’s wheels on the left arm of the woman’s jacket.

JANUARY 30TH, 8:04PM

“You’re not his friend. He doesn’t have friends.” In “The Adventure of the Five Orange Pips,” Holmes says, in response to an inquiry that Watson makes regarding his friends, “Except for yourself I have none.”

“He’s not paid or anything. He likes it.” This warning bears resemblance to a similar warning that Canon Lestrade tells Holmes in “The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans,” after discovering that Holmes is planning on breaking into a house in pursuit of the case: “One of these days you’ll go too far, and you’ll find yourself and your friend in trouble.” Holmes’ standard for accepting a case is very simple: it must be interesting. He does not turn down poor clients who cannot pay if they present an interesting problem; similarly, the promise of princely compensation cannot move him if he does not wish to be moved (as Mycroft Holmes knows, both in the Canon and on the show). In the Canon, Holmes mentions that the Yard and various private detectives pay him consulting fees, but quite often he “plays the game for the game’s own sake,” as he tells Mycroft in “The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington

Plans.” Donovan, of course, interprets this facet of Sherlock’s personality in a much more cynical way than Watson ever does.

“It was one of the reasons he loved London—rabbit-warren London of teeming millions.” In the Canon, London is almost a character unto itself. Watson notes that Holmes’ “knowledge of its byways was extraordinary,” and Holmes is persuaded to leave the city only with difficulty, as “he loved to lie in the very centre of five millions of people, with his filaments stretching out and running through them.”

“Baker Street. Come at once if convenient.” In “The Adventure of the Creeping Man,” Watson (who is not living at Baker Street) receives a telegram from Holmes one Sunday evening: “Come at once if convenient—if inconvenient come all the same. S.H.”

“Because you’re not a wealthy man.” There are numerous allusions in the Canon to Watson’s financial difficulties; he lives primarily off his Army pension and his medical practice is “never very absorbing.” (“The Adventure of the Red-Headed League”) He mentions postponing holidays due to an empty bank account, and also mentions losing half his Army pension to gambling on horses in “Shoscombe Old Place.”

“But I need to stop off somewhere first.” As Loren Estleman points out in his essay “On the Significance of Boswells,” when a gun is needed, it’s almost always Watson who carries it (though Holmes also has a gun and knows how to use it, he tends to favour bludgeoning weapons). Canon Watson generally waits for Holmes to tell him when a gun might be needed; in Sherlock, John makes the decision for himself.

JANUARY 30TH, 9:49PM

“It’s a three-patch problem.” Holmes’ use of pipe tobacco as a thinking aid is well documented (in “The Red-Headed League,” “The Man With the Twisted Lip,” and others). Naturally, in modern-day London, Sherlock’s ability to maintain a chain-smoking habit is limited (not to mention how ridiculous and affectatious he’d look carrying a pipe), and so, like the drug habit, the pipe-smoking has been updated to cigarettes and consigned to some not-so-long-ago past. When Sherlock needs additional chemical stimulation, he resorts to overdosing on nicotine patches. The original Canon quote, from “The Red-Headed League,” is “It is quite a three-pipe problem.”

“Can I borrow your phone?...Don’t want to use mine. Always a chance the number will be recognized.” In *A Study in Scarlet*, rather than using Watson’s phone to send a text, Holmes uses Watson’s name on a classified ad that he places in the local papers in an attempt to flush out the murderer. He tells Watson, “Excuse my using your name. If I used my own, some of these dunderheads would recognize it, and want to meddle in the affair.”

JANUARY 30TH, 10:01 PM

“22 Northumberland Street.” Possibly a reference to John Watson’s Army regiment, the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers. Also an actual street in London near Charing Cross, as well as a county in northern England, along the Scottish border.

“Thank you, Billy.” In the Canon, Billy was a pageboy of indeterminate age who, in some stories, answers the door at 221B, announces guests, runs errands for Holmes, and provides rudimentary assistance to Holmes with cases.

“You may as well eat. We may have a long wait.” Note that though he’s telling John to eat, Sherlock has shoved the menu away and clearly has no intention of eating himself. Holmes never eats while on a case; in “The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone,” he tells Watson that his body is “a mere appendix,” and that “the faculties become refined when you starve them...you must admit that what your digestion gains in the way of blood supply is so much lost to the brain.” And in *The Valley of Fear*, though the case is not yet solved or even explained, Watson is heartened to see Holmes dig into eggs and toast, because “the mere sight of his excellent appetite was an assurance of success, for I had very clear recollections of days and nights without a thought of food, when his baffled mind had chafed before some problem.”

“Right turn, one way, road work, traffic light, bus lane, pedestrian crossing, left turn only, traffic light.” Watson says in “The Adventure of the Empty House” that “Holmes’ knowledge of the byways of London was extraordinary,” an impressive feat considering the complexities of London’s map. It’s one of the hardest cities in the world to become a licensed cabbie in, with prospective cabbies (“Knowledge boys”) being required to learn 320 standard routes and an unknown number of “points of public interest” (hospitals, clubs, hotels, etc etc etc). It takes an average of 34 months and twelve attempts to pass the license test. (It seems likely that Sherlock Holmes trained as a cabbie; “The Knowledge,” as required for cabbies, was initiated in 1865.)

“Up the stairs. Onto the roof.” In *The Sign of the Four*, Sherlock scrambles onto a roof and climbs a drainpipe just to prove it can be done, and Watson has a leg injury that does not stop him from traipsing across London (though on the firm ground).

JANUARY 30TH, 10:26PM

“It stops being pretend if we find anything.” Canon Holmes famously used cocaine, as told by Watson in the second Holmes story, *The Sign of Four* (1890). After its development in the 1880s, cocaine was hailed as a miracle drug, and was first widely used as a painkiller and an anaesthetic and to cure morphine addiction (no one having realized that cocaine is quite addictive in its own right). Sigmund Freud, for example, was an early supporter and user (and addict) of cocaine. Arthur Conan Doyle (speaking through Watson) was quite ahead of his time in being suspicious of cocaine’s effect on people, as it was viewed as harmless well into the early 1900s, and was not made illegal as an over-the-counter medication until after World War I (and even then was still available with a prescription). Holmes’ cocaine use is referred to sporadically until the story “The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter,” (1905) where Watson refers to having successfully weaned his friend off of the drug, but also says that he knows that “the fiend was not dead but sleeping.”

As far as I know, very few Holmes adaptations have ever shown Holmes injecting cocaine on camera. Jeremy Brett doesn’t do it; Jude Law’s Watson remarks to Robert Downey, Jr.’s Holmes that what he’s drinking “is for eye surgery,” (a reference to cocaine’s use as a topical anaesthetic), Basil Rathbone makes one oblique reference to it. There’s a 2002 adaptation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* starring Richard Roxborough as Sherlock Holmes that includes it (even though there’s no references in Canon *Hound* to Holmes’ drug use). For a modern adaptation like *Sherlock*, of course, the vast difference in prevailing wisdom about drug use between Victorian times and our modern ones means that Sherlock’s drug use is relegated to an experimental phase in an angry schoolboy’s past, the only remnant of which is Sherlock’s ongoing struggle to quit smoking and restrict himself to nicotine patches when he needs artificial stimulation.

Most of the above information about the history of cocaine is from *Cocaine: An Unauthorized Biography* by Dominic Streatfield, 2001.

“Anderson, don’t talk out loud, you lower the IQ of the whole street.” In “The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans,” Watson remarks that “one of my friend’s most obvious weaknesses that he was impatient with less alert intelligences than his own.”

“Oh, and I didn’t notice it? Me?” Just as Sherlock knows that he would have noticed the pink phone if it was in his flat, Holmes knows, when confronted with new evidence at a crime scene in “The Adventure of the Norwood Builder,” that it isn’t that he didn’t see the evidence—it’s that the evidence wasn’t there.

JANUARY 30TH, 10:53PM

“You know every street in London. You know exactly where we are.” In *The Sign of Four*, Holmes and Watson take a cab to an unknown location while aiding a client. “I lost my bearings,” says Watson, “and knew nothing save that we seemed to be going a very long way. Sherlock Holmes was never at fault, however, and he muttered the [street] names as the cab rattled through squares and in and out by torturous by-streets.” (More on the cabbies: When Knowledge Boys/Girls are learning cab routes through London, they’re required to be able to list, on any given route, the order of side streets and traffic signals, the locations of roundabouts, and a myriad of other things—basically to do exactly what Sherlock does here, and in the Canon.)

“I’m surprised more of us don’t branch out.” This is somewhat similar to the line in “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” when Holmes observes that, “When a doctor does go wrong he is the first of the criminals. He has nerve and he has knowledge.”

JANUARY 30TH, 10:57PM

“There’s a good bottle and a bad bottle.” In *A Study in Scarlet*, the pills are discovered at the scene of a second body, and Holmes correctly deduces their purpose (one being poison, the other inert) at Baker Street. The Canon cabbie Jefferson Hope uses the pills, not as a game, but to “see if there is justice upon the earth, or if we are ruled by chance.” This is similar to the cabbie’s assertion in “A Study in Pink” that, “it’s not chance. It’s chess.” Neither cabbie believes in the existence of chance as they pursue their goals.

JANUARY 30TH, 11:09PM

“There’s shaving foam behind your left ear. Nobody’s pointed it out to you.” This is a remark from “The Boscombe Valley Mystery,” though it is made by Holmes to Watson (in one of their many introductory “Holmes draws amazing conclusions from miniscule evidence” expository conversations). “I know the military neatness which characterizes you. You shave every morning, and in this season you shave by the sunlight; but since your shaving is less and less complete as we get farther back on the left side, until it becomes positively slovenly as we get round the angle of the jaw, it is surely very clear that that side is less illuminated than the other.”

“You’re a dead man walking.” In the Canon, the cabbie has an aortic aneurism, not a brain aneurism.

“There’s a name no one says.” In *The Valley of Fear*, Holmes receives a coded message from an informant he knows only as Porlock, who works for Moriarty. Porlock tells Holmes that he fears that “He” is onto him. Holmes explains to Watson that Moriarty’s henchmen never refer to him by name, but when they refer to Him, you know exactly who they mean.

JANUARY 30TH, 11:13PM

“You’d do anything to stop being bored.” Canon Holmes doesn’t handle boredom any better than Sherlock does. It’s when he’s most likely to get destructive, either of himself or of the environment, as when he fires bullets into the walls of 221B Baker Street, or when Watson finds him shooting up cocaine because he doesn’t have any cases on.

“The bullet shattered the window, burst through the cabbie’s left breast and splintered into the door jamb behind.” A bullet is also fired through a window to kill a man in “The Adventure of the Empty House” as well as in “The Adventure of the Dancing Men.”

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“That’s a crack shot you’re looking for, but not just a marksman.” Watson is never described as a crack shot (though Colonel Sebastian Moran is), however, he does own at least one gun and knows how to use it—in *The Sign of Four*, he fires at Tonga during the boat chase on the Thames; and in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, he is one of the people to shoot the enormous hound at the end.

“You’re looking for a man probably with a history of military service and...nerves of steel...” In “The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone,” (one of only two Holmes stories told from the third person), Conan Doyle remarks that Watson “was always the man of action, and he rose to the occasion.”

“You know what? Ignore me.” Holmes does not always follow the letter of the law, or tell his professional counterparts the entire truth about a series of events. Sometimes he is perfectly content to let a case remain officially unsolved, and his only concern is to make sure that no innocent person gets put in the docks. In “The Adventure of the Devil’s Foot,” Holmes listens to the account of a murderer who felt himself quite justified; he and Watson agree and allow the murderer to disappear into central Africa. In

“The Boscombe Valley Mystery,” he tells a murderer that he will only hand the murderer’s confession over to the official forces in order to save an innocent man from getting hanged for the crime. In “The Adventure of the Abbey Grange,” Holmes enlists Watson as a jury of one, Watson promptly acquits the responsible party, and Holmes lets the criminal go, saying “So long as the law does not find some other victim you are safe from me.” Holmes sums up his perception of his position thusly, in “The Adventure of the Three Gables:” “I am not the law, but I represent justice so far as my feeble powers go.” Sometimes, in order to impose justice, Holmes must break the law.

“*This is my brother, Mycroft. Putting on weight again?*” In the Canon, Mycroft is not introduced until the story “The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter” (1893). He is described as very fat (“corpulent” is Conan Doyle’s word), hence Sherlock’s reference to putting on weight, as Mark Gatiss, the actor who plays Mycroft, is of course quite thin.

“*I occupy a minor position in the British government.*” In “The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans,” (1908) Holmes says (after being circumspect about his brother’s profession in “The Greek Interpreter,” the first tale in which Mycroft appears), “You are right in thinking that he is under the British government. You would also be right in a sense if you said that occasionally he *is* the British government.”

“*Lucky guess.*” “*I never guess.*” Though he does occasionally guess in *Sherlock* (mostly for humorous effect), Holmes in the Canon never guesses—he calls it a “shocking habit” in *The Sign of Four*. It is Holmes who intuits, though, which shoulder of Watson’s was wounded—Watson says he was shot in the shoulder in *A Study in Scarlet*, but does not mention which one.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

A SHERLOCKIAN'S ORIGIN STORY

I didn't read much Holmes as a kid. When I was in high school, we read "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" in class. Other than that, for a long time my impressions of Holmes and Watson were the usual cultural constants of deerstalker cap, meerschaum pipe, middle-aged respectable Victorians. Hounds and broughams and Bohemian scandals. And that was about it.

My grandfather, who was a professor of biology, loved Sherlock Holmes. He had this leather bound set of the Canon that I remember seeing in my grandparents' house in New Orleans. My grandfather died when I was in middle school, and because he lived in New Orleans and I grew up in Colorado, I wouldn't say I knew him well. I know these things: he read the newspaper, cover to cover, in the morning, reacting to the stories with quiet exclamations like "Oh, mercy," and "Hoo hah!" (I've never heard anyone else say "Hoo-ha!", but it was an all-purpose exclamation of surprise, dismay, or general interest.) He was quiet. Didn't talk much. He didn't ask the usual grownup annoyances about What Grade Are You In Now and What Do You Want To Be When You Grow Up and Look How Big You Are. I don't remember us ever having a drawn out conversation. But I would sit at his feet and play with toys while he read a book or the paper, in peaceful co-existence with each other. He was gentle. He loved all six of his children and treated them with respect (as evidenced, I think, by the fact that all of his children turned around and treated all of their own children with a love and respect that, as I grow older, I realize I'm lucky to have received). He was handy around the house. He loved dogs and jazz music. He loved my grandmother.

My family lucked out in the aftermath of Katrina. We lost no family members except for my uncle's cat. But my grandparents' house (where my grandmother lived, by herself now) took on five feet of water, and when the water finally left, 65 years of family history had drowned. My aunts and uncles took months to go through all the refuse, pulling out what they could salvage and throwing away the rest, and when they were done, the remnants of my grandparents' lives together fit into a 10'x10' storage unit. For my grandmother's 90th birthday, we had a celebration in New Orleans, and one of the things we did was split up all the stuff (my grandmother didn't want the vast majority of it, or thought it was time to let it go. She's been living with one of my aunts since 2005). Except for the big double bed, none of it was monetarily valuable. (And as an aside: the fact that six kids, 14 grandkids, and an assortment of in-laws could split up what amounts to an inheritance with not a single squabble is, I think, a tribute to the kind of parents that my grandparents were.)

What I got: A couple of the specimen bottles my grandfather used to use to collect water samples from the bayous. One of my grandmother's window ornaments. The cuckoo clock. And about twenty years worth of *Baker Street Journals*, a quarterly newsletter devoted to all things Sherlock.

Sherlock fans are notoriously obsessive. They are the original fandom. Entire books have been written trying to figure out what order the stories in the Canon go in, and how many wives Watson had, where Holmes spent his childhood. Uncovering details of the cases that Watson never wrote about. Floor plans of the Baker Street rooms. Holmes' childhood. Watson's childhood. And fanfic—Holmes vs. Jack the Ripper. Holmes and Irene Adler. And on and on and on. One hundred years hasn't exhausted their need to know more, hasn't filled in the gaps. I think Holmes appealed to my grandfather's precise, scientific mind. A few years ago, I also received some money from the sale of my grandmother's house—she sold it to the Road Home Initiative and split the money up amongst her children and grandchildren. I was going to use it to go to Europe, something I've wanted to do for awhile. Instead, I was stupid, and ended up having to use it to pay off credit cards. Which is such a waste and disrespect of what my grandmother gave to me, and I'm fucking ashamed of myself for it. I do better with literary inheritances.

But in order to appreciate these quarterly journals, I had to be conversant in the stories. So I started reading the Canon, and discovered that I knew Holmes pretty well, but I didn't know Watson at all. Nigel Bruce was the Watson that lived in my head, but that Watson does not bear even a passing resemblance to the Watson that Arthur Conan Doyle wrote. And as I read the stories over and over, these days Watson is the reason I read them, not Holmes. Watson reminds me of my grandfather.

I read Holmes because it is, quite literally, my grandfather's legacy to me. It may be the only thing I share with him. Reading these stories connects me not to Victorian England, but to mid-century New Orleans, and a smart, quiet man living his life the best way he knew how.

"The Problem at Thor Bridge" opens with the famous statement that, "Somewhere in the vaults of the bank Cox & Co., at Charing Cross, there is a travel-worn and battered tin dispatch box with my name, John H. Watson MD, Late Indian Army, painted upon the lid. It is crammed with papers, nearly all of which are records of cases to illustrate the curious cases which Mr. Sherlock Holmes had at various times to examine." This battered tin dispatch box is one of the more enduring pieces of Holmesian folklore, and many Holmes pastiches or fan fic purport to have been found in the mythical tin box that, for all we know, is still lost in the depths of the bank. They found King Richard III under a parking lot recently. Why not the box?

My inheritance came out of the wreckage of a wooden house. Out of the chaos of a collision between nature's brutality and institutional stupidity. To see 65 years of your family's history blown

apart, casually destroyed, broken into pieces, slams into you all the way down to your marrow. But to think that somewhere there is a battered tin dispatch box, waiting patiently, containing all of these stories, is like having an anchor to hold on to. To think that somewhere there's a little pocket of time that I can slip through and find Holmes and Watson smoking pipes and putting their feet up by the fire...who wouldn't want that? Who wouldn't want to feel like these things can last forever?

It's fiction, I know. And I don't mean Holmes and Watson. I mean the faith in legacy and order—it's empty, at the end. It's not something that's safe to rely on. Of all the millions and millions of dinosaurs, we only have a few hundred skeletons left to tell us that they ruled the earth. Of the millions and billions of humans who have walked the earth, we know details of a far few. Not even a fraction of a fraction of 1%—most people live and die and are entirely forgotten within two or three generations. And of the memories and artifacts we have, so many of those we only have by accident—we wouldn't know anything of Plato or Aristotle if their libraries hadn't been looted by the Romans, brought back to Rome, and somehow found their way into the possession of (I think) Cicero, who read the books and was so taken by them that he started writing about them himself and getting other people interested. The Gospel of Q was discovered in an ancient Egyptian trash heap. The Dead Sea Scrolls were forgotten in clay pots in a cave. The continent of Antarctica was discovered and then forgotten twice, before we finally discovered it enough to remember it. How many ancient works of wisdom were burned for fuel? How many secrets were lost because the people who knew them were murdered, or didn't have kids to pass them on to? How many sank to the bottom of the ocean, or decayed? How much was swept out to sea in the wake of a hurricane's storm surge? Humankind has forgotten more than we can ever comprehend. But somehow we carry on believing that we can know all there is to know about the past, if we just keep looking.

What would an archaeologist conclude about my family, digging through that 10×10 storage unit?

Arthur Conan Doyle is aware of the transiency of life, of course. He lost his fair share of family members. One of Watson's unwritten cases concerns “the strange case of James Phillimore, who, stepping back into his own house to get his umbrella, was never more seen in this world.” But in Holmes' world, everything leaves a trace, everything has a reason, and if only you can both see and observe you can puzzle it out. Chaos has no place in Holmes. Giant fuck-off storms that destroy entire swaths of a landscape have no place. Not even Jack the Ripper has a place in Holmes, and he actually existed. You could write the history of humanity as that of a species striving to keep the chaos of the universe at bay with every available scrap of our considerable determination and creativity, and in Holmes, the fight has been won. Holmes survived Hurricane Katrina when most of the rest of my grandmother's house

died. How can I not hold on to all of that, with all that I can? What else can I learn from my grandfather's inheritance?

So, other than my generally obsessive personality, I think that's why Holmes has such pull for me, why I'm so defensive of him. He's what my grandfather left me. More than God, Holmes convinces me that everything in the world happens for a reason, and that chaos is not chaos, but merely our inability to perceive pattern.

I hope he's right.

A slightly edited version of this essay previously appeared on my blog at spandrella.wordpress.com