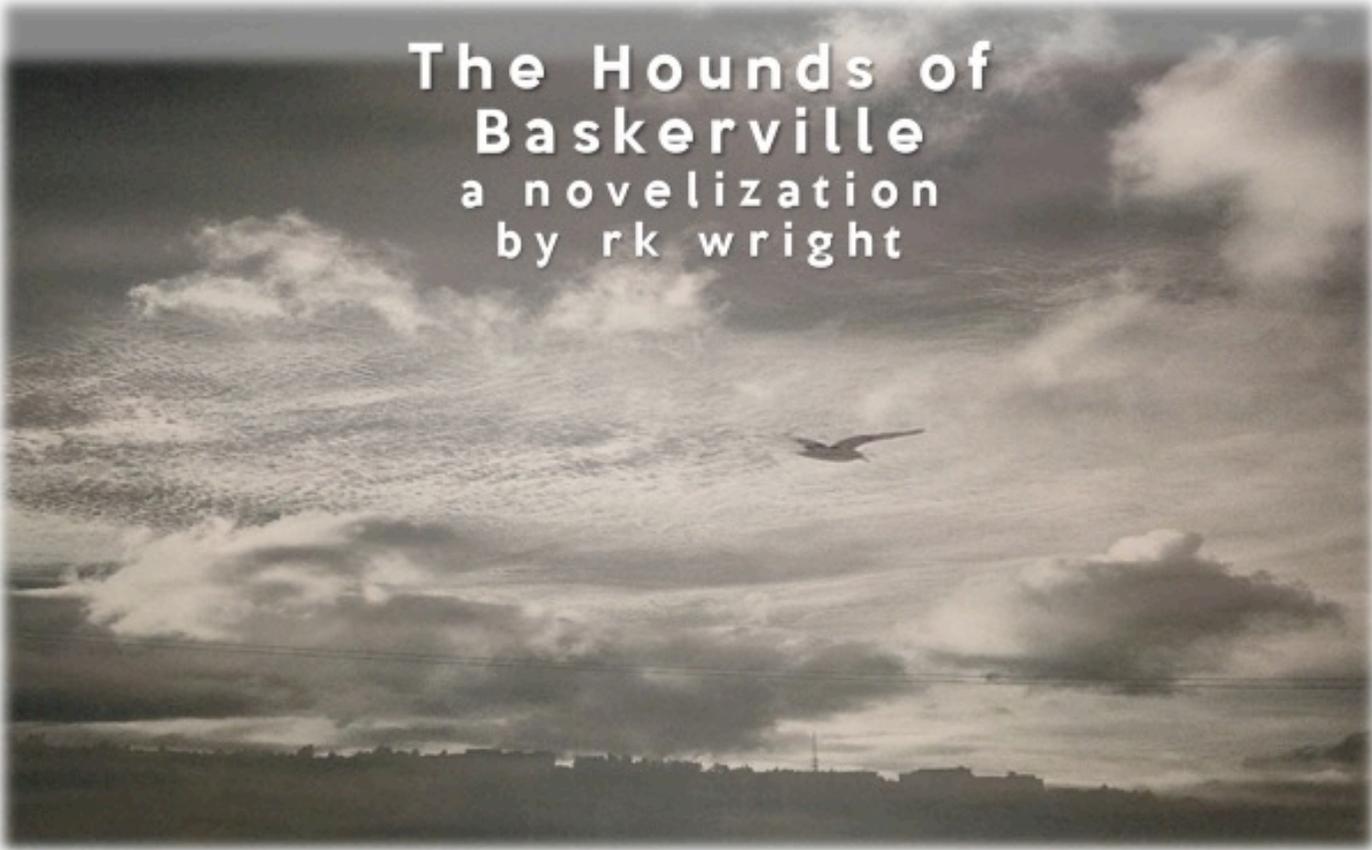




# SHERLOCK



The Hounds of  
Baskerville  
a novelization  
by rk wright

Sherlock: The Hounds of Baskerville

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*“Seeing is limiting, you know.”*

*—Jeremy Brett*

## PROLOGUE

*Run. Run.*

*It's after you.*

*And it's faster than you.*

*It's got your dad.*

He tripped over dead soggy leaves, lost himself in the moor fog.

*The Hound. The Hound has got your dad.*

*Run.*

The moor got deeper and darker, one of those moonless nights he'd always hated, but he kept moving, away from the thing.

*It doesn't matter that your chest hurts. That you can't breathe. Run.*

*You can still hear the growling and the screaming behind you.*

*Run.*

"Oh, hello. Are you all right?"

He realized it was no longer night. The sun was rising behind the person. This person was talking to him, he realized. He couldn't see her face.

"What is it, dear? Are you lost?"

He drew in his breath and blinked. She did not fit into the world. The world was roaring and foggy and filled with dark, vicious hounds all on his heels. He heard a noise next to her, and looked down.

Hound. She had a hound. A dog. A hound.

He started screaming and couldn't stop. It never stopped, really, not for twenty years: it stopped coming out of his mouth, but years and years later, he could still hear it thrumming across the inside of his head, a constant siren underneath everything.

## BAKER STREET

### TWENTY YEARS LATER

“Well,” said Sherlock, entering the flat at 221B Baker Street, “That was tedious.”

John looked Sherlock up and down, eyes wide. Sherlock was carrying a seven-foot harpoon, and his pale shirt was brightly spattered with blood. It ran down his arms and hands and almost coated his face. John was forcibly reminded of soldiers he’d seen who had sustained head wounds, but the blood did not seem to be Sherlock’s. “You went on the tube like that?”

“None of the cabs would take me,” said Sherlock petulantly, striding out of the room. John blinked at the space where he’d been.

Sherlock returned twenty minutes later, cleaned of blood, barefoot and wearing his dressing gown over a clean shirt and slacks. He paced back and forth, which was slightly alarming because he was still passing the harpoon from hand to hand. “Nothing?” he asked John, who was now reading the paper.

“Military coup in Uganda.”

“Hmm.”

“Another photo of you with the, uh—“

Sherlock looked down and saw the picture of him in the deerstalker hat and groaned.

“Cabinet reshuffle.”

“Nothing of importance?” By “importance,” of course, he meant “interesting murders” or “covert international incidents.” Sherlock pounded the harpoon butt on the floor in frustration. “Oh, God! John, I need some. Get me some.”

John stopped reading the paper and looked at him. “No.”

“Get me some!”

“No. Cold turkey. We agreed. No matter what. Anyway. You paid everyone off, remember? Nobody within a two mile radius will sell you any.”

“Stupid idea. Whose idea was that?”

John raised his eyebrows and looked at him without answering.

“Mrs Hudson!” called Sherlock, then started pawing through—tossing aside, really—the papers on his desk. He dug through boxes and tossed them aside as well.

“Sherlock,” said John. “You’re doing really well. Don’t give up now.”

“Tell me where they are,” said Sherlock, not turning around. “Please. Tell me.”

“Can’t help. Sorry,” said John, not sounding sorry at all.

“I’ll let you know next week’s lottery numbers.”

John laughed.

“It was worth a try,” said Sherlock, and went back to tearing apart the flat.

“Yoo hoo,” called Mrs Hudson, coming up the stairs.

“My secret supply,” said Sherlock, his head in the fireplace, “What’ve you done with my secret supply?”

“Me?”

“Cigarettes! What have you done with them, where are they?”

“You know you never let me touch your things. I chance it’d be a fine clean.”

He narrowed his eyes at her. “I thought you were my housekeeper.”

“I’m not. How about a nice cuppa? And perhaps you could put away your harpoon.”

“I need something stronger than tea. Perhaps seven per cent stronger.” He suddenly wheeled and pointed the harpoon at her. She winced. “You’ve been to see Mr Chattergee again.”

“Pardon?”

“Sandwich shop. That’s a new dress. There’s flour on the sleeve. You wouldn’t dress like that for baking.”

“Sherlock—“ John tried to head him off, but Sherlock barrelled on.

“Thumbnail, tiny traces of foil. Been at the scratch cards again. We all know where that leads, don’t we?” He sniffed exaggeratedly. “Mmm, Casbah Nights. Pretty racy for first thing on a Monday morning, wouldn’t you agree? I’ve written a little blog on the identification of perfumes. It’s on the website. You should look it up.”

“Please—“

“Wouldn’t put your hopes on that cruiser Mr Chattergee. He’s got a wife in Doncaster that nobody knows about.”

“Sherlock--!” John was shouting now.

“Nobody except me.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” said Mrs Hudson, her voice trembling, “I really don’t.” She turned in ran downstairs.

Sherlock crouched on his heels in his armchair, hugging his knees to his chest.

John threw his paper aside. “What the bloody hell was all that about?”

Sherlock was rocking back and forth slightly. “You don’t understand.”

“Go after her and apologize.”

Sherlock looked at him in disbelief. “Apologize?”

John nodded.

Sherlock let out a long sigh. “John, I envy you so much.”

John leaned his chin on his hand in an unconscious imitation of his therapist. “You envy me.”

“Your mind. It’s so placid. Straightforward. Barely used. Mine’s like an engine. Racing out of control. A rocket tearing itself to pieces, trapped on the launch pad. *I need a case.*”

“You just solved one! By harpooning a dead pig, apparently.”

“That was this morning. When’s the next one?” His long fingers danced nervously on the arms of the chair.

“Nothing on the website?”

In response, Sherlock passed John his laptop—his email was open—and started reciting emails from memory. “Dear Mr Sherlock Holmes. I can’t find Bluebell anywhere. Please please please can you help.” He stood up and went back to pacing.

“...Bluebell?”

“A rabbit, John!”

“Oh.”

“Ahh, but there’s more. Before Bluebell disappeared it turned luminous. ‘Like a fairy,’ according to little Kirsty. Then the next morning, Bluebell was gone. House was still locked. No sign of forced entry.” His eyes opened wide. “What am I saying? This is brilliant. Phone Lestrade. Tell him there’s an escaped rabbit.”

“You serious?”

“It’s this or Cluedo,” Sherlock said ominously.

“No. We are never playing that again.”

“Why not?”

“Because it’s not actually possible for the victim to have done it, Sherlock. That’s why.”

“It was the only possible solution.”

“It’s not in the rules.”

“Well then the rules are wrong!”

They were interrupted by the doorbell.

“Single ring,” noted John.

“Length of depression just under half a second.”

They drew their conclusion at the same time. “Client.”

The client, a young man with jughandle ears and dressed in expensive tweed, had the raw, bewildered look that John remembered seeing on the faces of soldiers who’d been ambushed while out

on patrol. He introduced himself as Henry Knight, and didn't want to tell them why he was there, saying instead that the DVD he'd brought along would explain everything. John watched with curiosity, Sherlock with bored impatience.

The DVD turned out to be a BBC 4 documentary. It opened on a shot of the grey, lichen-crusted rocks that peppered Dartmoor. A female voice was narrating. "Dartmoor. It's always been a place of myth and legend. But is there something else lurking out here? Something very real? Because Dartmoor's also home to one of the government's most secretive operations—the chemical and biological weapons research centre which is said to be even more sensitive than Porton Down. Since the end of the Second World War, there have been persistent stories about the Baskerville Experiments—genetic mutations, animals grown for the battlefield. There are many who believe that within this compound, in the heart of this ancient wilderness, there are horrors beyond imagining. But the real question is: Are all of them still inside?"

The scene changed to an interview with Henry, the young man sitting in the room with them. On the screen, he wasn't looking at the camera or at the interviewer, but down at his hands. "I was just a kid. It was on the moor. It was dark, but I know what I saw." The camera showed a child's drawing—labelled as Henry's, age nine—of a snarling dog, black as the surrounding background, its shoulders humped up over its head. Henry's story continued as a voiceover. "I know what killed my father."

Sherlock sucked in a breath and turned off the telly. "What did you see?" he asked.

Henry looked confused. "Oh. I was—I was just about to say." He turned back to the telly as if he expected it to go back on.

"Yes. The TV interview. I prefer to do my own editing." Sherlock steepled his fingers and looked steadily at Henry.

Henry stared at him. "Yes. Sorry, yes, of course. Excuse me." He pulled a napkin out of his coat pocket and blew his nose. He seemed to be pulling himself together.

"In your own time," said John, an encouraging smile on his face.

"But quite quickly," said Sherlock.

Henry took a breath. "Do you know Dartmoor, Mr Holmes?"

"No."

"It's an amazing place. It's like nowhere else. It's sort of...bleak. But beautiful."

"Not interested. Moving on."

"We used to go for walks after my mum died. My dad and me. Every evening we'd go out onto the moor."

"Yes. Good. Skipping to the night that your dad was violently killed, where did that happen?"

“There’s a place. It’s a sort of local landmark called Dewar’s Hollow.” He paused for effect, but there was none. “That’s an ancient name for the devil,” he explained.

Sherlock’s facial expression did not change. “So?”

“Did you see the devil that night?” asked John.

Henry stared at him for a long moment. Then he nodded. “Yes. It was huge. Coal-black fur. With red eyes.” His voice was slowing down, becoming more hesitant. Filled with fear in spite of the quiet London sitting room. “It got him. Tore at him. Tore him apart. I can’t remember anything else. They found me the next morning. Just wandering on the moor. My dad’s body was never found.”

John turned to Sherlock. “Red eyes, coal-black fur. Enormous build. Wolf?”

“Or a genetic experiment?”

“Are you laughing at me, Mr Holmes?” Henry asked.

Sherlock looked at him flatly. “Why? Are you joking?”

“My dad was always going on about the things they were doing at Baskerville. About the type of monsters they were breeding there. People used to laugh at him. At least the TV people took me seriously.”

“I assume it did wonders for Devon tourism.”

John leaned forward, his elbows on his knees. “Henry—whatever did happen to your father, it was twenty years ago. Why come to us now?”

“I’m not sure you can help me, Mr Holmes, since you find it all so funny.” He got up to go.

“Because of what happened last night,” said Sherlock, answering John’s question.

“Why? What happened last night?” John asked Sherlock.

Henry stopped in the doorway, flabbergasted. “How—how do you know?”

“I don’t know, I notice. You came up from Devon on the first available train this morning. You had a disappointing breakfast and a cup of black coffee. The girl in the seat across the aisle fancied you, and although you were initially keen, you’ve now changed your mind. You are, however, extremely anxious to have your first cigarette of the day. Sit down, Mr Knight, and do please smoke. I’d be delighted.”

John sighed. Henry, bewildered, sat back down and fumbled in his pockets for cigarettes. “How on earth did you notice all that?”

“It’s not important—“ John tried to head off the inevitable.

“Punched out hole where your ticket’s been checked—“

“Not *now*, Sherlock.”

“Oh, please. I’ve been cooped up here for ages.”

“You’re just showing off.”

“Of course. I am a show off. That’s what we do.” He turned back to Henry. “Tray napkin. Used to mop up the spilled coffee. Strength of the stain shows that you didn’t take milk. Traces of ketchup on it and around your lips and on your sleeve. Cooked breakfast, or the nearest thing those trains can manage. Probably a sandwich.”

“How—how did you know it was disappointing?”

“Is there any other type of breakfast on a train? The girl. Female handwriting is quite distinctive. Wrote her phone number down on the napkin. I can tell from the angle she wrote it that she was sat across from you on the other side of the aisle. Later, after she got off I imagine, you used the napkin to mop up your spilled coffee, accidentally smudging the numbers. You’ve been over the last four digits yourself with another pen so you wanted to keep the number. Just now, though, you used the napkin to blow your nose. Maybe you’re not that into her after all. Then there’s the nicotine stains on your fingers. Your *shaking* fingers. I know the signs. No chance to smoke one on the train, no time to roll one before you got a cab here. It’s just after 9:15. You’re desperate. The first train from Exeter to London leaves at 5:46am. You were on the first one possible, so something important must’ve happened last night. Am I wrong?”

Henry stared at him for a long moment, then pulled in a great, shaky breath. “No,” he said. “You’re right. You’re completely, exactly right. Bloody hell,” he said, glancing at John, who was rolling his eyes into his coffee cup, “I heard you were quick.”

“It’s my job,” said Sherlock. He leaned forward in his chair until he was mere inches from Henry’s face. “*Now shut up and smoke.*”

“Henry,” said John, as Henry lit a cigarette at last, “Your parents both died and you were, what, seven years old? That must—“ He paused as Sherlock took a great exaggerated sniff and sucked Henry’s second-hand smoke into his lungs. He sat back with a look of relief on his face. John tried to carry on. “That must be, uh, quite a trauma. Have you ever thought that maybe you invented this story, this—“ He paused as Sherlock got up once again to suck Henry’s smoke through his nose, “—to account for it?”

“That’s what Dr Mortimer says.”

“Who?”

“His therapist,” supplied Sherlock. Henry looked questioningly at him. “Obviously,” said Sherlock, in reply to the unasked question.

“Louise Mortimer. She’s the reason I came back to Dartmoor. She thinks I have to face my demons.”

“So what happened when you went back to Dewar’s Hollow last night, Henry?” asked Sherlock.

Henry looked at him, his forehead knotted in suspicion.

“You went there on the advice of your therapist and now you’re consulting a detective. What did you see that changed everything?”

“It’s a strange place, the Hollow,” said Henry. The hand that held the cigarette started to shake again. “It makes you feel so...cold inside. So afraid.”

“Yes,” said Sherlock, rolling his eyes, “If I wanted poetry I’d read John’s emails to his girlfriends. Much funnier. *What did you see?*”

“Footprints,” said Henry at last, swallowing. “On the exact spot where I saw my father torn apart.”

Sherlock leaned back and looked at the ceiling. John couldn’t immediately tell if it was from interest or disappointment. “Man’s or a woman’s?” he asked.

“Neither. They were—“

“Is that it?” interrupted Sherlock. “Nothing else? Footprints, is that all?”

“Yes. They were—“

“No, sorry. Dr Mortimer wins. Childhood trauma masked by an inventive memory. Boring. Goodbye, Mr Knight, thank you for smoking.”

“But what about the footprints?”

“They’re probably paw prints. Could be anything, therefore, nothing. Off to Devon with you. Have a cream tea on me.” He stood up and started to leave the room.

“Mr Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!”

Sherlock stopped walking. He slowly spun around. “Say that again.”

“I found footprints, they were—“

“No no no, your exact words. Repeat your exact words from a moment ago, exactly as you said them.”

Henry blinked in confusion. “Mr Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound.”

Sherlock’s eyes slid out of focus and into his thoughts. “I’ll take the case,” he said.

“Sorry, what?” asked John in surprise.

“Thank you for bringing this to my attention. It’s very promising.”

“No no no,” said John, “Sorry, what? A minute ago footprints were boring, now they’re very promising?”

“It’s got nothing to do with footprints. As ever, John, you weren’t listening. Baskerville. Ever heard of it?”

John shrugged. “Vaguely. It’s very hush hush.”

“Sounds like a good place to start.”

“You’ll come down, then?” said Henry, sounding surprised, relieved, and trepidatious, all at once.

“No, I can’t leave London at the moment. Far too busy. But don’t worry! I’m putting my best man onto it!” He clapped John on the shoulder. “I always rely on John to send me all the relevant data as he never understands a word of it himself.”

“What are you talking about, you’re *busy*?” asked John. “You don’t have a case. A minute ago, you were complaining—“

“Bluebell, John! I’ve got Bluebell. The Case of Vanishing Glow-in-the-Dark Rabbit.” He leaned confidentially towards Henry. “NATO’s an uproar.”

“So—sorry—no—you’re *not* coming, then?”

Sherlock shook his head sadly at John.

John looked back at him for just a moment before the light came on. He looked at Sherlock in exasperation. “Okay, fine,” he said, getting up and taking Sherlock’s cigarettes out from under the skull on the mantelpiece.

Sherlock caught them and immediately tossed them over his shoulder. “Don’t need those anymore. I’m going to Dartmoor.” He turned to Henry. “You go on ahead, Henry. We’ll follow later.”

“Sorry—so you *are* coming?”

“Twenty-year-old disappearance? A monstrous hound? Wouldn’t miss this for a world!” A smile of joy lit his face.

Forty minutes later, Sherlock held a cab while John brought their bags downstairs. The noise of a sandwich hitting the glass door of the deli next door made him turn around to see Mrs Hudson yelling furiously at the deli proprietor. “Looks like Mrs Hudson finally got to the wife in Doncaster,” he observed to Sherlock, who was also watching.

“Wait until she finds out about the one in Islamabad,” said Sherlock, climbing into the cab. “Paddington Station, please,” he told to the cabby.

## DARTMOOR

### THAT AFTERNOON

John hadn't really been to the countryside since before he deployed to Afghanistan. Sitting in the passenger seat of the rental as Sherlock drove from Exeter St. David's to Grimpen Village, John felt it all coming back to him. The height of the sky, the way the landscape changed colour with the light. The stone walls and little houses that looked like they'd been there for a thousand years or more. The way the dirt on the hills had eroded, revealing their stone hearts. It was beautiful, he had to admit; but it also reminded him why he'd been so desperate to leave when he was a kid.

He would go mad if he had to live here again, he knew. But it was good to take a breath that went all the way down to the bottom of your lungs just the same.

Fifteen minutes outside of Grimpen, Sherlock pulled the rental over and clambered to the top of a tor nearest the road and stood there, silhouetted against the sky, while John consulted a map. "There's Baskerville," he said, pointing to distant white cement blocks and barbed wire; "That's Grimpen Village," came next, towards a church spire poking up over the trees to Sherlock's right; "So that must be—yes. Dewar's Hollow." He pointed to a dark shadow of trees lurking below Baskerville.

"What's that?" asked Sherlock, pointing at the space between them and Baskerville.

John looked through his binoculars and could make out a wire fence and little red and black warning signs dotting the expanse. "A minefield? Technically, Baskerville's an army base, so I guess they've always been keen to keep people out."

"Clearly," said Sherlock. After a few more moments regarding the minefield, he climbed down off the hill and they continued on their drive to Grimpen.

They parked in the rear of what appeared to be the village's sole lodging place, the Cross Keys Bed and Breakfast, steering around a group of tourists who were following a young man in a hoodie. "...tell your friends, tell anyone," the young man was saying, as Sherlock and John walked by. "Don't be strangers. And remember—stay away from the moor at night if you value your lives." He was standing next to an easel sign with a silhouette of a bristling, wolf-like creature perched on top of a hill with "Beware the Hound!" inscribed on it.

John cast Sherlock a sideways glance. Sherlock shrugged and turned up his collar. "Con," he explained simply, as they entered the Cross Keys, whose sign out front advertised "Boutique Rooms and Vegetarian Cuisine."

At his home outside of Grimpen Village, Henry was in the middle of a session with Dr Mortimer. He had recounted his experience in Dewar's Hollow the previous night, and it had bled—as it always

did—into the memory of the night his father died. The screaming, the roaring of the hound, the dry rustle of leaves being thrown in the struggle. The nightmare noises that had followed him for years. “That part doesn’t change,” he told Dr Mortimer.

“What does?” she asked.

Henry covered his face with his hands and tried to think. “There’s something else—it’s a word—” he closed his eyes and tried to see it. “Liberty,” he said, his eyes snapping open.

Dr Mortimer kept her face impassive. “Liberty?”

“There’s another word. In. I-N. Liberty in. What do you think it means?” He looked hopefully at her, but she only shook her head in response.

The Cross Keys had been renovated to look like a traditional English inn, with slabbed wooden doors and whitewashed walls, but the recessed lighting in the ceiling and the shiny new taps at the bar—as well as the free wi-fi—belied the rustic atmosphere. Rustic appearance, modern amenities. Picture perfect English village. Sherlock did a slow circle of the pub while John got them rooms from the barman.

“Hey—sorry we couldn’t do a double room for you boys,” said the barman, handing John two keys.

“That’s fine,” said John, “we’re not—” He decided not to bother. “There you go,” he said, handing the barman cash.

“Oh, ta. I’ll just get your change,” he said, crossing the bar to the cash register.

As he pocketed the keys, John’s eye scanned a stack of invoices and bills on a small spike. A handwritten invoice from Undershaw Meat Supplies caught his eye. With a quick glance at the barman to make sure his back was still turned, John tugged on the invoice, tearing it off the spike, and pocketed it.

“Here you go,” said the barman, handing him his change.

“I couldn’t help noticing on the map of the moor—a skull and crossbones?”

“Oh, that.”

“Pirates?”

“No, no. The Great Grimpen Minefield, they call it.”

“Oh, right?”

“It’s not what you think. It’s that Baskerville testing site. It’s been going for 80-odd years. I’m not sure anyone really knows what’s there anymore.”

“Explosives?”

“Oh, not just explosives. Break into that place and if you’re lucky you just get blowed up, so they say. In case you’re planning a nightly stroll.”

“Ta. I’ll remember.”

“Aye. It buggers up tourism a bit. So thank god for the demon hound.” He gave a wry chuckle.

“Did you see that show? The documentary?”

“Quite recently, yeah.”

“God bless Henry Knight and his monster from hell.”

“You ever seen it? The hound?”

“Me? No. Fletcher has.” He pointed out the open door to the young man in the hoodie, who was now talking on his cell phone. “He runs the walks. The monster walks. For the tourists, you know? He’s seen it.”

“That’s handy. For trade.”

“I’m just saying we’ve been rushed off our feet, Billy,” the barman said to the man who’d just walked up wearing a chef’s jacket.

“Yeah, lots of monster hunters,” said Billy. “Don’t take much these days. One mention on Twitter and—umph. We’re out of WKD,” he said to the barman. “What with the monster and the ruddy prisoner, I don’t know how we sleep nights. Do you, Gary?”

“Like a baby,” said Gary.

“That’s not true.” Billy turned to John. “He’s a snorer.”

“Hey! Pssht.”

“Is yours a snorer?”

“Got any crisps?” asked John.

Sherlock, meanwhile, had ducked out of the pub at the mention of Fletcher’s having seen the hound. He picked up an abandoned pint off a table as he followed Fletcher to a picnic table. Fletcher had pulled a racing form out of his back pocket and sat on the table with his feet on the bench.

“Mind if I join you?” asked Sherlock.

The boy shrugged in a manner that suggested it was a free country.

“It’s not true, is it?” Sherlock asked him. “You haven’t actually seen this...hound thing?”

“You from the papers?” asked the boy suspiciously.

“No, nothing like that. Just curious. Have you seen it?”

“Maybe.”

“Got any proof?”

“Why would I tell you if I did? Scuse me.” He got up to go as John came over and sat down, carrying his own pint.

“I called Henry—“ started John.

Sherlock cut him off. “Bet’s off, John. Sorry.”

“What?”

“Bet?” asked Fletcher.

Sherlock acted as though he hadn’t heard Fletcher. “My plan needs darkness. Reckon we’ve got another half an hour of light left—“

“Wait, wait,” cut in Fletcher. “What bet?”

“Oh, I bet John here fifty quid that you couldn’t prove you’d seen the hound.”

“Yeah, the guys in the pub said you could,” said John.

Fletcher gave a little laugh. “Well,” he said, “you’re going to lose your money, mate.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah. I seen it. Only about a month ago. Up at the Hollow. It was foggy, mind, couldn’t make much out—“

“I see,” said Sherlock. “No witnesses, I suppose.”

“No, but—“

“There never are.”

“Wait!” He held out his cell phone to show them a picture he’d taken. It was blurry, and mostly showed green trees, the dark blur in the middle that was entirely indeterminate. “There.”

“Is that it?” asked Sherlock. “it’s not exactly proof, is it? Sorry, John. I win.”

“Wait, wait. That’s not all. People don’t like going out there, you know. To the Hollow. Gives em a bad sort of feeling.”

“Is it haunted?” whispered Sherlock. “Is that supposed to convince me?”

“Don’t be stupid. Nothing like that. But I reckon there is something out there. Something from Baskerville escaped.”

“A clone? Superdog?” Sherlock was smiling.

“Maybe. God knows what they’ve been spraying on us all these years. Or putting in the water. I wouldn’t trust em as far as I could spit.”

“Is that the best you’ve got?” asked Sherlock.

Fletcher shoved his hands in his pockets. “I had a mate once who worked for the MOD. One weekend, we were meant to go fishing but he never showed up, well, not till late. When he did, he was white as a sheet. I can see him now. ‘I’ve seen things today, Fletch,’ he said. ‘I ain’t never want to see

again. Terrible things.’ He’d been sent to some secret Army place. Porton Down, maybe. Maybe Baskerville. Or somewhere else. In the labs there, the really secret labs, he said he could see terrible things. Rats as big as dogs, he said. And dogs—dogs the size of horses.” He reached into his knapsack and pulled out a plaster cast of a canine paw print that was almost as big as Sherlock’s own hand.

John looked at the cast, then at Sherlock. “We did say fifty?”

Without a word, Sherlock dug into his wallet and handed John a fifty pound note. “Ta,” said John. Fletcher put the cast back in his bag, smiling to himself.

John assumed, as Sherlock drove across the moor, that they were going to Henry Knight’s, but then Sherlock turned down a drive that dead ended at a motorised gate, barbed wire, and bomb-sniffing dogs. An MPG soldier holding a rifle stood between the car and the gate, and Sherlock braked and rolled down his window. The soldier stepped around to Sherlock’s side. “Pass, please,” he said politely. Sherlock reached into his pocket and handed the soldier a card. “Thank you,” said the guard.

John waited until the guard was out of earshot, verifying Sherlock’s ID in the guard hut. “You’ve got ID for Baskerville?” he said quietly. “How?”

“Nothing specific to this place,” said Sherlock as a second soldier circled the car with a German Shepherd, doing a security check. “It’s my brother’s. Access to all areas. I, um, acquired it ages ago. Just in case.”

“Brilliant.”

“What’s the matter?”

“We’ll get caught.”

“No, we won’t. Well, not just yet.”

“Caught in five minutes. ‘Oh, hi, we just thought we’d have wander round your top secret weapons base.’ ‘Really? Great! Come in, kettle’s just boiled.’ That’s if we don’t get shot.” He stopped talking as the MPG came back over. “Safe travels,” he said, handing Sherlock’s ID back.

“Thank you,” said Sherlock, pocketing the ID as the gate ground open.

“Mycroft’s name literally opens doors,” observed John as they drove through the gate.

“I’ve told you—he practically *is* the British government. I reckon we’ve got about twenty minutes before they realize something’s wrong.”

They parked the car and a silent, stern-looking MPG escorted them across the outer lot towards the doors. There were more guards—in black and maroon berets, and civilian-types walking with them in white lab coats. Sherlock could see guards on the roofs as well as in front of all the doorways.

An Army Jeep pulled up next to them, and a young soldier got out and fell into step beside Sherlock. “Are we in trouble?” he asked.

“Are we in trouble, *sir*,” corrected Sherlock.

“Yes, sir. Sorry, sir.”

“You were expecting us?”

“Your ID showed up straight away, Mr Holmes. Corporal Lyons. Security. Is there something wrong, sir?”

“Well, I hope not, Corporal. I hope not.”

“It’s just, we don’t get inspected here, you see, sir. It just doesn’t happen.”

“Ever heard of a spot check?” asked John. The corporal regarded him neutrally. John pulled out his own—legitimate—ID. “Captain John Watson,” he said, showing it to Lyons. “Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers.” He returned the corporal’s salute.

“Sir. Major Barrymore won’t be pleased, sir. He’ll want to see you both.”

“I’m afraid we won’t have time for that,” said John. “We’ll need to full tour. Right away. Carry on.” When the soldier hesitated, John added, “That’s an *order*, Corporal.”

That got him moving. “Yes sir,” he said, turning and walking them to the main door. Lyons swiped his access card, and Sherlock swiped Mycroft’s. The panel beeped ACCESS GRANTED at them and the doors cranked open automatically. They were walking down a fluorescently lit hallway with foam ceiling access panels. Sherlock let the corporal get a head start on them. “Nice touch,” he said to John, quietly.

“Haven’t pulled rank in ages.” John’s lips were barely moving.

“Enjoy it?”

“Oh, yeah.”

The corporal was waiting for them at a lift. They both swiped their access cards again, and Lyons pushed the button for the first basement—there were, Sherlock noticed, five.

The elevator opened on a lab, all white tile and stainless steel. Scientists in sterile suits and latex gloves crouched over microscopes and Petri dishes. Gleaming steel cages with monkeys in them stood around the perimeter of the room.

“How many animals do you keep down here?” asked Sherlock.

“Lots, sir.”

“Any ever escape?”

“They’d have to know how to use that lift, sir. We’re not breeding them that clever.”

“Unless they have help.”

One of the white-suited scientists intercepted them. "And you are?" he asked.

"Sorry, Dr Frankland," said Lyons. "I'm just showing these gentlemen around."

"Ahh. New faces, how nice. Careful you don't get stuck here, though, I only came to fix the tap."

He smiled and went on his way, back towards the lift.

"How far down does that lift go?" asked John.

"Quite a way, sir."

"And what's down there?"

"Well, we have to keep the bins somewhere, sir. This way, please, gentlemen." He resumed leading them across the lab.

"So what exactly is it that you do here?" John asked Lyons, past rats in pyramidal cages, lab techs in surgical masks and counters full of centrifuges.

"I thought you'd know, sir," answered Lyons mildly. "This being an inspection."

"Well, I'm not an expert, am I?"

"Everything from stem cell research to trying to cure the common cold, sir."

"But mostly weaponry?"

"Of one sort or another, yes." They had reached another door and Lyons swiped his access card.

"Biological? Chemical?"

"One war ends, another begins, sir. New enemy to fight. We have to be prepared."

Sherlock swiped his card at the next door and checked his watch.

The door opened and they were in another, though smaller, brilliant sterile white laboratory. There were only two scientists in this room, one holding the leash of a rhesus monkey, the other holding a clipboard. "Okay, Michael," said the one with the clipboard, "let's try Harlow 3 next time."

"Dr Stapleton?" said Lyons.

"Yes?" She looked up and saw the visitors. "Who's this?"

"Priority Ultra, ma'am. Orders from on high. An inspection."

She looked at Sherlock and John in surprise. "Really?"

"We are to be accorded every courtesy. Dr Stapleton, what's your role at Baskerville?" asked Sherlock.

She stared at him, a look of incredulous laughter on her face.

"Accorded *every* courtesy, isn't that the idea?" asked John.

The smile faded from her face. "I'm not free to say. Official secrets."

"You most certainly are free and I suggest you remain that way," Sherlock said, his eyes flat and his voice arrogant.

“I have a lot of fingers in a lot of pies. I like to mix things up. Genes, mostly. Now and again, actual fingers.”

“Stapleton. I knew I knew your name.” Sherlock pulled a pad and pen out of his pocket and started scribbling.

“Doubt it,” she told him.

“People say that there’s no such thing as coincidence,” said Sherlock. “Dull lives they must lead.” He held up his notebook in front of her face. On it he had written a single word. BLUEBELL.

She stared at it, silently, for several long seconds. Then asked, “Have you been talking to my daughter?”

“Why did Bluebell have to die, Dr Stapleton?” asked Sherlock.

“The rabbit?” asked John.

“Disappeared from inside a locked hutch which was always suggestive.”

“The *rabbit*.”

“Clearly an inside job.” Sherlock did not take his eyes from Dr Stapleton’s face.

“Oh, you reckon?” asked Stapleton.

“Why? Because it glowed in the dark?” asked Sherlock.

“I have absolutely no idea what you’re talking about. Who are you?” Stapleton was starting to look angry.

Sherlock did not reply to this. “Well,” he said to Lyons, “I think we’ve seen enough for now. Corporal, thank you so much.”

“That’s it?” asked Lyons.

“That’s it. It’s this way, isn’t it?” Sherlock started for the door.

“Just a minute!” called Stapleton. Sherlock ignored her.

John kept as close to Sherlock’s heels as he could. “Did we just break into a military base to investigate a rabbit?” he asked Sherlock furiously. Sherlock’s phone chimed with a text message and he pulled it out.

What are you doing? M.

“23 minutes. Mycroft’s getting slow,” observed Sherlock, swiping his card at the lift.

Inside the lift was the researcher who’d warned them about getting stuck in Baskerville. Frankland. “Hello again,” he smiled at them.

When the lift doors opened, they found their way blocked by a dour-looking soldier. John found himself staring, not because of the man’s angry posture, but because he was sporting a full beard,

something he'd almost never seen on Army officers—only rarely in Afghanistan on officers who worked primarily with Afghan soldiers, or on soldiers who were Sikhs or Muslims.

Lyons was clearly caught off guard. “Um, Major—“

“This is bloody outrageous,” growled Barrymore. His voice was harsh and gravelly. “Why wasn't I told?”

“Major Barrymore, is it?” asked John. “Yes. Well. Good. Very good. We're very impressed, aren't we, Mr Holmes.”

“Deeply,” said Sherlock, not caring if he sounded like he meant it. “Hugely.” He stepped past Barrymore and headed down the hall. Mycroft chimed at him again.

What's going on Sherlock? M.

He'd missed a comma. Must be angry.

Barrymore was following them down the hall. “The whole point of Baskerville was to eliminate this kind of bureaucratic nonsense—“

“I'm so sorry, Major—“

“—inspections!”

“New policy. Can't remain unmonitored forever. Goodness knows what you'd get up to. *Keep walking,*” he said sideways to John. It was very much past time to be going.

The corporal, who had peeled off into a side office when someone called his name, now came running back out. “Sir!” he called, and smacked a red alarm button on the wall. An alarm started to drone and the door in front of them locked. “ID unauthorized, sir.”

Sherlock turned. “What?”

“I've just had the call.”

“Is that right?” asked Barrymore, looking pointedly at Sherlock. “Who are you?”

“Look,” said John, “there's obviously been some kind of mistake—“

Sherlock handed his ID card, with Mycroft's photo on it, to Barrymore.

“Clearly not Mycroft Holmes.”

“Computer error, Major,” said John, still trying to keep up the charade. “It'll all have to go in the report.”

“What the *hell's* going on?” demanded Barrymore, his decibel level rising even further.

“It's all right, Major, I know exactly who these gentlemen are.” It was Dr Frankland, who'd ridden up with them on the lift.

“You do?”

“I’m getting a little slow on the face, but Mr Holmes here isn’t someone I expected to show up in this place. Good to see you again, Mycroft.” He held out his hand to shake. Sherlock grasped it. “I had the honour of meeting Mr Holmes at the WHO conference in...Brussels, was it?”

“Vienna.”

“Vienna! That’s it. This is Mr Mycroft Holmes, Major, there’s obviously been a mistake.”

After a moment, Barrymore gestured to Lyons to cancel the alarm. “On your head be it, Dr Frankland,” he said stiffly.

“I’ll show them out, Corporal,” said Dr Frankland.

“Very well, sir,” said Corporal Lyons.

The door opened and Sherlock, John, and Dr Frankland stepped back out into the Devon air.

“Thank you,” said Sherlock to Frankland.

“This is about Henry Knight, isn’t it? I thought so. I knew he wanted help, but I didn’t realize he was going to contact Sherlock Holmes. Don’t worry, I know who you really are. Never off your website. Thought you’d be wearing the hat, though.”

“That wasn’t my hat.”

“I hardly recognized you without the hat.”

“It wasn’t my hat.”

“I love the blog, too, Dr Watson.”

“Cheers,” said John.

“The, uh, the pink thing. And the one about the aluminium crutch—“

“You know Henry Knight?” interrupted Sherlock.

“Yes. Well, I knew his dad better. He had all sorts of mad theories about this place. Still, he was a good friend.” He looked round and noticed that Barrymore had followed them outside, and was making no effort to hide the fact that he was watching them. “Listen. I can’t really talk now.” He reached into a pocket. “Here’s my cell number. If I can help with Henry, give me a call.”

“I never did ask, Dr Frankland, what exactly is it that you do here?”

“Mr Holmes, I would love to tell you. But then, of course, I’d have to kill you.” He broke into laughter.

Sherlock did not. “That would be tremendously ambitious of you. Tell me about Dr Stapleton.”

Frankland smiled benignly. “I never speak ill of a colleague.”

“Yet you’d speak well of one, which you’re clearly omitting to do.”

“I do seem to be, don’t I?”

“I’ll be in touch.”

“Anytime.”

“So?” John asked Sherlock, as they walked away from Frankland.

“So?”

“What was all that about the rabbit?”

Sherlock didn’t answer.

John sighed. “Oh please, could we not do this, this time?”

Sherlock looked confused. “Do what?”

“You being all mysterious with your cheekbones and turning your coat collar up so you look cool.”

“I don’t do that.”

“Yeah, you do,” said John, as they got back into the car.

As they drove back toward Grimpen Village, John watched the clouds roll across the sky, changing the light on the moor. Eventually he got to where Sherlock had already been for at least half an hour. “So...the email from Kirsty. The, um, missing luminous rabbit.”

“Kirsty *Stapleton*, whose mother specializes in genetic manipulation.”

“She made her daughter’s rabbit...glow in the dark.”

“Probably a fluorescent gene. Removed and spliced into the specimen. Simple enough these days.”

“So...”

“So we know that Dr Stapleton performed secret genetic experiments on animals. The question is, has she been working on something deadlier than a rabbit?”

“To be fair, that is quite a wide field.”

Sherlock shot him a look that said that there would not be further conversation until John could refrain from saying stupid things, and they drove in silence the rest of the way to Henry Knight’s house.

Henry Knight, it turned out, lived in an 18<sup>th</sup> century manor house—or rather, he lived in a modern house that was clumsily clopped on to one end of the manor house, making a building of a peculiar L-shape, all floor-to-ceiling glass windows and dark, imported stone on one angle; and crumbling grey ancient bricks and narrow, wood-framed windows with ripply glass on the other. Sherlock and John entered through the conservatory in the old wing, which was gradually being reclaimed by the plants growing there, the wood around the windows slowly rotting and peeling away and leaving gaps in the glasswork. The outer plaster was crumbling too, but inside was fresh paint and wallpaper, and neatly decorated rooms that looked un-lived in, like they’d come from furniture catalogs.

Henry greeted them with a smile and led them down the hall to the modern wing of the house. John couldn't conceal his surprise. "This is, uh...are you, um, rich?"

"Yeah."

Behind Henry's back, John raised an eyebrow at Sherlock, whose face was clearly asking if he could take John *anywhere*, as they proceeded to the kitchen. This room, at least, looked lived in—even slept in, John noticed, seeing the blankets folded up on one corner of the sofa. Henry had tea made, and Sherlock dolloped sugar into his as Henry started talking. "There's a couple of words," he said, his eyes on his hands, which were tracing a pattern on the countertop. "It's what I keep seeing. 'Liberty—'"

"Liberty?" asked John.

Henry looked at him and nodded. "Liberty. And 'in.' Just that." He picked up the milk. "Are you finished?" he asked. John nodded, and Henry put it back in the refrigerator.

"Mean anything to you?" John asked Sherlock under his breath.

"'Liberty in death,' isn't that the expression?" said Sherlock. "The only true freedom."

"So," said Henry, a falsely bright smile on his face, "What now, then?"

"Sherlock's got a plan," John told him.

"Yes," said Sherlock with a smile.

"Right," said Henry.

"We take you back out onto the moor—"

"Okay..."

"—and see if anything attacks you."

"What?" asked John.

"That should bring things to a head."

"At night?" asked Henry. He did not seem to be blinking anymore. "You want me to go out there at night?"

"*That's* your plan?" asked John. "Brilliant."

"Any better ideas?" asked Sherlock.

"That's not a plan," said John.

"Isn't it? There's a monster out there, John. There's only one thing to do—find out where it lives." He smiled at Henry in what he thought was a reassuring way. Henry looked like he had just found himself at the edge of a very, very high place and was trying to not look down.

The moor got dark and shadowy well before the sun completely faded from the sky, and John, Henry, and Sherlock turned on their torches as they walked between two rocky tors on the way from

Henry's house to Dewar's Hollow. Henry led the way, stumbling blindly in spite of his torch. The darkness deepened as they came down from the hill and entered the trees.

A rustle in the bushes made John stop. He turned and listened, squinting into the shadows, letting Sherlock and Henry go ahead. A birdcall startled him, but he heard no more of the rustling. What he *saw*, through a break in the trees and across a wide field, was a light flashing intermittently at him from the top of a hill. He turned to call Sherlock, only to realize that he and Henry had disappeared into the dark.

The light was still flashing irregularly. Morse Code? He pulled out his notepad to write the letters. UMQRA.

The light stopped. John looked at what he'd just written for a moment, then pushed his notebook back in his pocket and hurried to catch up, though "hurrying" in this case was more of a theory, as he had to tread carefully to avoid tripping on rocks and tree roots.

Sherlock, of course, had noticed when John slipped away. That didn't perturb him. What *did* perturb him was watching Henry's anxiety notch ever upward as they walked, and knowing that John was better at coddling than he himself was. "I met a friend of yours," he said, breaking the silence.

"What?"

"Dr Frankland."

"Oh. Right. Him. Yeah."

"He seems pretty concerned about you."

"He's a worrier. He's been very kind to me since I came back."

"He knew your father?"

"Yeah."

"But he works at Baskerville, didn't your dad have a problem with that?"

"Well, mates are mates, aren't they? I mean, look at you and John."

"What about us?"

"Well, I mean, he's a—pretty straightforward bloke, and you..." He trailed off. "They agreed never to talk about work, Uncle Bob and my dad." He stopped walking. Sherlock looked at him with raised eyebrows, and Henry nodded down to where the ground in front of them dropped away.

"Dewar's Hollow."

Well, thought Sherlock, he supposed it was creepy, in a bad American horror movie sort of way—all fog and dead branches and dark shadows. Somewhere, a dog howled, and Sherlock—after waiting a moment for John to reappear—could see that Henry had no intention of moving. He started to scramble down the slope, and Henry—perhaps only out of a desire to not be left alone—followed.

Sherlock's torch bounced off...footprints? The fog wasn't thick on the moor, but it had settled in the Hollow like a puddle, blurring the edges of everything, and the torch created more shadows than light.

He heard a noise at the top of the Hollow, and shone his torch in that direction, expecting to see John catching up to them.

It was not John.

It was...No.

"Oh my god. Oh my god. Oh my god," babbled Henry, stumbling closer to Sherlock. "Did you see it?"

Sherlock looked at him, but didn't answer. Then he shoved Henry out of his way and clambered out of the Hollow, heading back in the direction of Henry's house. Henry scrambled to follow. It was *not*, Sherlock told himself silently. It was *not* it was *not* it was *not*.

They met John running towards them on the trail. "Did you hear that?" John asked them.

"We saw it. We *saw* it," said Henry, his face flushed.

"No," said Sherlock, "I didn't see anything."

"But—what're you talking about?" asked Henry.

"I didn't. See. Anything," said Sherlock, not slowing his pace.

Henry managed to hold his peace until he and John were letting themselves back into his house through the conservatory. Sherlock peeled off to go back to the Cross Keys alone. He'd said barely a word since they left the Hollow.

"Look," said Henry, as they entered his kitchen, "He must have seen it. *I* saw it, he must have. He must have. I—why? Why, why would he say that? It was there, it was—"

"Henry? Henry, I need you to sit down. Try and relax, please," said John, pointing him towards the sofa.

Henry collapsed onto the sofa. "I'm okay, I'm—"

"Listen, I'm going to give you something to help you sleep, all right?" John watched him carefully.

"This is good news, John," said Henry, taking off his scarf. Incredibly, a smile crept across his face. "It's good. I'm not crazy. There is a hound. There is. And Sherlock, he saw it too. No matter what he said. He saw it."

It was nearly an hour before Henry calmed down enough that John felt it was safe to leave him. Henry refused to take any sedatives, so John settled for asking him to at least try to sleep, and exacting his promise that Henry would call either himself or Dr Mortimer if he needed to. Even then, he might

not have left, but something in Sherlock's manner on their way back to Henry's made John anxious and pulled him back toward the Cross Keys. And Henry's anxiety fed off other people's energy. The longer John stayed there, the more Henry talked, and the more wound up he got. John hoped that solitude would tranquilize the giddiness in Henry's brain.

Sherlock was sitting by the fire in the inn's common room. He looked to be in his usual Thinking Pose—hands steepled in front of his chin, eyes far away—but as he sat down across from him, John could see the muscles in his jaw twitching.

"Well, he's in a pretty bad way," said John, sitting in the armchair next to Sherlock. "Manic. Totally convinced there's some mutant superdog roaming the moors. And there isn't, is there? Because if people knew how to make a mutant superdog, we'd know. They'd be for sale, I mean. That's how it works." He pretended not to notice the sweat on Sherlock's temples. "Listen, um, on the moor I saw someone signalling. Morse. I guess it's Morse. Doesn't seem to make much sense. UMQRA. Does that mean...anything?" He gave Sherlock a moment to reply, but Sherlock merely closed his eyes. "So, okay. What have we got?" Something was wrong, that was plain, but John knew from experience that asking what was wrong did no good with Sherlock. If he kept talking, though, he might say something altogether right—or altogether wrong—that would bring Sherlock out of himself and back to the problem at hand. "We know there's footprints, because Henry found them, and so did the tour guide. We all heard something. Maybe we should just look for whoever's got a big dog."

"Henry's right." The words seemed to come out of Sherlock's mouth in spite of his best efforts to keep them in.

"What?"

"I saw it too."

"*What?*"

"I saw it too, John."

"Just—just a minute. You saw what?"

"A hound," said Sherlock, pulling his eyes away from the fire at last to look at John. His voice was shaking. "Out there in the Hollow. Gigantic hound."

John stared at him. "Look, Sherlock—we have to be rational about this," he said, scarcely believing that *he* was the one saying this to *Sherlock*. "Now you, of all people, can't just—let's just—stick to what we know, yes? Stick to the facts."

"Once you rule out the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be true," said Sherlock softly.

"What does that mean?"

Sherlock lifted a tumbler of brandy to his lips with a shaking hand. He stared at it as if he'd never seen such a thing before. "Look at me. I'm afraid, John. Afraid."

"Sherlock—"

"I've always been able to keep myself distant." He downed the brandy in one. "Divorce myself from feelings. But look, you see? My body's betraying me. Interesting, yes? Emotions? The grease on the lens, the fly in the ointment."

"Yeah, alright, Spock, just take it easy. You've been pretty wired lately. You know you have. I think you just got out there and got yourself a bit worked up."

Sherlock looked at him with incredulous fury. "*Worked up?*"

"It was dark and scary—"

"Me? There's nothing wrong with me." Even as he said it, his head rocked as though he was dizzy, and he put his hands to his temples and tried to breathe steady.

John's concern was growing. "Sherlock..." Sherlock didn't answer, but at his temples, his hands shook violently. "Sherlock—"

"There is nothing wrong with me, do you understand?" yelled Sherlock. A sudden silence fell over the common room. Sherlock took a deep breath to master himself. "You want me to prove it, yes?"

John wanted no such thing, but he sat in his chair and waited for Sherlock to prove it to himself.

"Looking for a dog, yes? Great big dog. That's your brilliant theory. *Cherchez le chien*. Good. Excellent. Yes. Where should we start?" He turned and looked at the other lodgers in the common room. "How about them? The sentimental widow and her son, the unemployed fisherman. The answer's *yes*."

"Yes?"

"She's got a West Highland Terrier called Whisky. Not exactly what we're looking for."

"Sherlock, for God's sake—"

"Look at the jumper he's wearing. Hardly worn. Clearly he's uncomfortable in it. Maybe it's because of the material, more likely the hideous pattern suggests it's a present, probably Christmas. So he wants into his mother's books. Why? Almost certainly money. He's treating her to a meal but his own portion is small. That means he wants to impress her. I bet he's trying to economize on his own food."

"Or maybe he's just not hungry."

"No. Small plate. Starter. He's practically licked it clean. She's nearly finished her pavlova. If she'd treated him, he'd have as much as he wanted. He's hungry, all right, and not well off, you can tell that much due to his cuffs and his shoes.

“How do you know she’s his mother?” he said, both anticipating and imitating John’s next question. “Who else would give him a Christmas present like that? Well, it could be an aunt or an older sister but mother’s more likely. Now. He was a fisherman. Scarring pattern on his hands. Very distinctive. Fish hooks. They’re all quite old now, which suggests he’s been unemployed for some time. Not much industry in this part of the world, so he turned to his widowed mother for help. ‘Widowed?’ Yes. Obviously. She’s got a man’s wedding ring on a chain round her neck. Clearly her late husband’s, and too big for her finger. She’s well-dressed but her jewellery’s cheap. She could afford better. But she’s kept it. Sentimental. Now, the dog. Tiny little hairs all over the leg from where it gets a little bit too friendly. No hairs above the knees, suggesting it’s a small dog. Probably a terrier. In fact it is. A West Highland Terrier called Whisky. ‘How the hell do you know that, Sherlock?’ Because she was on the same train as us and I heard her calling its name. And that’s not cheating, that’s *listening*. I use my senses, John, unlike some people. So you see, I am *fine*. In fact, I’ve never been better, so just *Leave. Me. Alone.*”

“Yeah,” said John. “Okay. Okay. I mean, why would you listen to me? I’m just your friend.”

“I don’t have friends,” said Sherlock, his voice dripping with contempt.

“Nah,” said John. “Wonder why.” He got up and walked out of the common room, out to the back lawn of the pub to get some air. He looked up at the night sky and tried very hard to not curse out loud. Then he looked out across the moor, a dark black ocean under the moon, and forgot about cursing.

A light was flashing at him from the top of the hill.

Henry had curled up on his couch, and even taken the pill that John had left behind, but he couldn’t sleep. Finally he sat up, pressing his hands against his eyes. He felt exhausted and wired and the sleeping pill made him feel like his thoughts were running through syrup.

Or maybe he was asleep after all, dreaming that he was awake. Howling dogs and Liberty In galloped around the inside of his skull.

He climbed off the sofa and stood in front of the plate glass windows facing his back garden.

John still had his torch in his pocket, and he flipped it on as soon as he got out of reach of the inn’s lights. The light in front of him flashed steadily away from the top of a low hill. As he reached the summit, close enough to illuminate the area with his torch, he realized something was wrong. Very wrong.

The hilltop was clustered with a half dozen cars. In some, he could see men, alone—or at least, they were alone from the waist up—but at least one most certainly wasn't. The windows of a red Peugeot were fogged, and the car was rocking rhythmically on its tires. The car's headlights were flashing in time with the rocking.

This time John did curse—though under his breath—as he turned around to walk back to the inn. His phone beeped with a text message.

Henry's therapist currently in Cross Keys Pub. –S.

So?

Interview her?

WHY SHOULD I? asked John, typing in all caps because he couldn't roll his eyes in frustration via text.

Sherlock's response was a photo of Dr Mortimer. She was...attractive. Very. Attractive. "Oh, you're a bad man," muttered John, shoving his phone in his pocket.

Henry curled back up on the couch and turned on the telly, flipping past the wolf documentaries and the late-night werewolf horror flicks, hoping to find a nice boring documentary on the manufacture of paper money or something that would put him to sleep.

The floodlights in his garden, which were triggered by motion sensors, suddenly snapped on. Henry looked out the windows and saw that his hose was trickling water.

The floodlights faded off. Henry turned back to the telly, but then, instead of going back to channel surfing, turned it off.

As he did so, the floodlights crashed on again. But he could see nothing moving, nothing except his own reflection. Unless...was that...

In a panic, he staggered to the television table and pulled a semiautomatic pistol out of the drawer, but there was nothing to point it at. Only the lights, turning on and then fading off in response to movement that he could not see. He sank to the floor, covered his face in his hands, and started to cry.

John's evening, on the other hand, had improved immeasurably. Sherlock had vacated the seat in front of the fire by the time he'd returned, leaving him free to sit with Dr Mortimer, who was really quite a charming woman. "More wine, doctor?" he asked her.

"You trying to get me drunk, doctor?" She smiled at him.

"Thought never occurred," John said, topping off her glass and his.

"Because awhile ago, I thought you were chatting me up."

“Oh? Where did I go wrong?”

“When you started asking me about my patients.”

“Well, you see, I am one of Henry’s oldest friends.”

“Yeah, and he’s one of my patients, so I can’t talk about him. Though he has told me about all his oldest friends. Which one are you?”

“A new one?”

She nodded, not surprised.

“Okay, what about his father? He wasn’t one of your patients. Wasn’t he some sort of...conspiracy nutter theorist?”

“You’re only a nutter if you’re wrong.”

“And was he wrong?”

“Oh, I should think so.”

“But he got fixated on Baskerville, didn’t he? With what they were doing in there? Couldn’t Henry have gone the same way? He started...imagining a hound?”

“Why do you think I’m going to talk about him?” She looked like she was laughing at him, but he knew she was deadly serious.

“Because I think you’re worried about him, and because I’m a doctor too, and because I have another friend who...might be having the same problem.” He looked at her, and her face had gone serious, and he could tell she was thinking about it, if only reluctantly. He waited, letting the guilt and resignation work its way around her insides.

“Dr Watson!” exclaimed a voice behind him, and a heavy hand clamped on his shoulder. John turned and saw Dr Frankland, from Baskerville. He was holding a half-empty pint glass and looking a bit flushed.

“Hi,” said John, not trying to hide his lack of enthusiasm.

“Hello,” said Frankland to Dr Mortimer. She half-smiled at him, looking startled, Frankland put down the pint glass on the table and leaned down so his face was level with John’s. “How’s the investigation going?”

John looked at him flatly. “Hello?”

“What investigation?” asked Mortimer.

“Didn’t you know? Don’t you read the blog? Sherlock Holmes—“

“It’s—“ started John, then stopped.

“Sherlock who?”

“Private detective! This is his P.A.!” And he clapped John on the shoulder again.

“P.A.?” asked John.

“Well...live-in P.A.”

“Perfect,” said John, hating Frankland more with every passing second.

“Live-in...” said Mortimer, almost to herself.

“This is Dr Mortimer, Henry’s therapist,” said John.

“Oh, hello,” he said, offering his hand. “Bob Frankland.” He turned back to John. “Listen. Tell Sherlock I’ve been keeping an eye on Stapleton. Any time he wants a little chat.” Again with the shoulder pounding, and then, at last, he was walking away. John turned back to Dr Mortimer, who was putting on her coat and had her handbag on her lap.

“Why don’t you buy him a drink? I think he likes you.” She got up and walked out. John didn’t stop her.

It was barely dawn when Sherlock got up and left the inn. He left a note for John and drove out on the moor, climbed a tor, breathed in the sharp morning air. Looked across the land, at Baskerville, down the path that led to Dewar’s Hollow, and off in the other direction to Henry’s manor house. House, Hollow, Lab. He needed a plan, and a clear head. The previous night’s experience was—no, he corrected himself. It wasn’t an experience, it was evidence, and it needed to be evaluated and assimilated and worked into a theory, just like any other evidence. Something had happened that he could not yet explain, and so his brain had registered it as a danger. If he could define it, it would cease to be a danger.

With the facts in order, he climbed down the hill, and proceeded to Henry’s house.

Henry let him in, looking pale and exhausted, still wearing the same clothes from the previous night. “Morning! How are you feeling?” demanded Sherlock, grabbing his shoulders and looking in his face.

“I...I didn’t sleep very well.”

“That’s a shame. Shall I make us some coffee? Oh look, you’ve got damp.” He pointed above the door, then walked past Henry when Henry looked up to see.

In the kitchen, Sherlock opened and closed all the cupboards quickly, looking for coffee beans and filters and sugar. The mugs they’d used yesterday were still on the sideboard. Henry trailed after him into the kitchen. “Listen,” he said. “Last night...”

Sherlock raised his eyebrows and tried to give the smile he’d seen John give to clients to show he was listening.

“Why did you say you hadn’t seen anything? I mean, I only saw the hound for a minute, but—“

“Hound.”

“What?”

“Why do you call it a *hound*, why *hound*?”

“Why, what do you—“

“It’s odd, isn’t it? Strange choice of words. Archaic. It’s why I took the case. ‘Mr Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound.’ Why say ‘hound’?”

“I don’t know, I—“

“Actually, better skip the coffee.” He exited the house, leaving the coffee half-made on the counter. Henry stared after him.

As he walked down the lane and past an old church, he spotted John, sitting on an old headstone and writing in his notebook. He changed direction and walked over.

“Did you get anywhere with that Morse code?” he asked.

“No,” said John, standing up and walking away.

“UMQRA, wasn’t it? Umqra.”

“Nothing. Look, forget it. I thought I was onto something. I wasn’t.”

“Sure?”

“Yeah.”

“How about Louise Mortimer, did you get anywhere with her?” He was still following John, who had fallen into the military walk that he used when he was upset.

“No.”

“Too bad. Did you get any information?”

“You’re being funny now?”

“I thought it might break the ice a bit.”

“Funny doesn’t suit you. Stick to ice.”

“John—“

“It’s fine.”

“No, wait—what happened last night. Something happened to me. Something I’ve not really experienced before.”

“Yes. You said. Fear. Sherlock Holmes got scared, you said.”

“No no no, it was more than that, John.” He grabbed John’s arm and spun him around to stop him walking away. “It was *doubt*. I felt *doubt*. I’ve always been able to trust my senses, the evidence of my own eyes, until last night.”

“You can’t actually believe that you saw some kind of monster?”

“No, I can’t believe that. But I did see it. So, the question is—How? *How?*”

“Yes. Yeah, all right, good. So you’ve got something to go on, then? Good luck with that.” He walked away.

“Listen—“ Sherlock called after him. “What I said before, John. I meant it. I don’t have *friends*. I’ve just got one.”

John turned and looked at him for a long moment. “Right,” he said, then turned and walked away again.

Sherlock stood in utter bewilderment. “John? John! You are amazing! You are fantastic!”

“Yes, all right. No need to overdo it.”

“You’ve never been the most luminous of people, but as the conductor of light, you are unbeatable.”

“Cheers. What?”

“Some people who aren’t geniuses have got an amazing ability to stimulate it in others.”

“Hang on, you were saying sorry a minute ago, don’t spoil it. Go on. What have I done that’s so bloody stimulating?”

Sherlock held up his notebook for John to see. On the open page he’d written HOUND.

“Yeah. So?”

“What if it’s not a word? What if it’s individual letters?” He held up the notepad again. He’d added decimals. H.O.U.N.D.

“You think it’s an acronym?”

“Absolutely no idea. But—“ he stopped. Their walking had taken back to the Cross Keys pub and there, standing framed in the open doorway, was Detective Inspector Lestrade from Scotland Yard. Smiling at them.

“What the hell are you doing here?” Sherlock demanded.

“Nice to see you, too. I’m on holiday, would you believe?”

“No. I wouldn’t.”

Lestrade ignored this. “Hello, John.”

“Greg.”

“I heard you were in the area. What’re you up to? You after this hound of hell, like on the telly?” said Lestrade.

“I’m waiting for an explanation, Inspector. Why are you here?” said Holmes.

“I’ve told you, I’m on holiday.”

“You’re brown as a nut. You’re clearly just back from your holidays.”

“Maybe I fancied another one.”

“Oh, this is Mycroft, isn’t it?”

“Now, look—“

“Of course it is. One mention of Baskerville and he sends down my handler to—to spy on me incognito. Is that why you’re calling yourself *Greg*?”

John blinked at him. “That’s his name.”

“Is it?”

“Yes,” said Lestrade. “If you’d ever bothered to find out. Look. I’m not your handler. I don’t just do what your brother tells me.”

“Actually,” said John, “You could be just the man we want.”

Now it was Sherlock’s turn to blink. “Why?”

“Well, I’ve not been idle, Sherlock. I think I might’ve found something.” He dug into his pockets and did a quick check to make sure the Cross Keys proprietors weren’t in earshot. “Here. Didn’t know if it was relevant. Starting to look like it might be.” He handed Sherlock the crumpled invoice he’d taken from the pub counter the previous morning. “That is an awful lot of meat for a vegetarian restaurant.”

“Excellent,” said Sherlock.

“A nice, scary Inspector from Scotland Yard who can put in a few calls might come in very handy.” John looked at both men to make sure they were interested, then he tapped the bell next to the register to summon the innkeeper. “Shop!”

Upon seeing Lestrade’s warrant card, Gary and Bill obediently brought out the large ledger books that they kept their accounts in, and waited anxiously while Lestrade looked through them. While they waited, Sherlock brought John a cup and a saucer.

“What’s this?” asked John, confused.

“Coffee. I made coffee.”

“You never make coffee.”

“I just did. Don’t you want it?”

“You don’t have to keep apologizing.” John looked down at the cup in his hands. “Thanks.” He took a sip and winced. “I don’t take sugar.” He took another sip, conscious that Sherlock was watching him. “It’s nice. It’s...good.”

“Do your records go back only two months?” Lestrade asked Gary and Billy. “So when you had the idea, after the TV show went out—“

“It’s me,” said Billy. “It was me. I’m sorry, Gary. I couldn’t help it. I had a bacon sandwich at Cal’s wedding and one thing just led to another.”

“Nice try,” Lestrade told him.

“Look,” said Gary. “We were just trying to give things a bit of a boost, you know? A great big dog run wild up the moor—it was heaven-sent. It was like us having our own Loch Ness Monster.”

“Where do you keep it?” asked Lestrade.

“Was an old mineshaft. It’s not far. He was all right there.”

“Was’?” asked Sherlock.

Gary sighed. “We couldn’t control the bloody thing. It was vicious. And then, a month ago, Billy took him to the vet, and uh—you know.”

“It’s dead?” asked John.

“Put down,” said Gary.

“Yeah,” agreed Billy, morosely. “No choice. So it’s over.”

“It was just a joke, you know?” pleaded Gary.

“Yeah, hilarious,” said Lestrade. “You’ve nearly driven a man out of his mind.” He got up and walked out. John followed him out and caught him up.

“You know, he’s actually pleased you’re here,” John asked him. “Secretly pleased.”

“Is he? That’s nice. I suppose he likes having all the same faces back together. Appeals to his—his—“

“Asperger’s?” said John, as Sherlock caught up with them.

“So, you believe him, about having the dog destroyed?” Lestrade asked him.

“No reason not to,” said Sherlock.

“Well, hopefully there’s no harm done. Not sure what I’d charge them with, anyway. I’ll have a word with the local force. That’s that, then. Catch you later.” He grinned at them as he walked away.

“I’m enjoying this. It’s nice to get London out your lungs.”

“So that was *their* dog that people saw out on the moor?” John asked Sherlock.

“Looks like it.”

“But that wasn’t what you saw. That wasn’t just an ordinary dog.”

“No. It was immense. Had burning red eyes and it was glowing, John, its whole body was glowing...I’ve got a theory but I need to get back in at Baskerville to test it.”

“How? Can’t pull off the ID trick again.”

“Might not have to.” Sherlock pulled out his phone and made a call. “Hello, brother dear. How are you?”

The second security screening at Baskerville was much the same—closed gate, bomb-sniffing dogs, armed soldiers who took their identification, though this time Sherlock gave them his own ID instead of Mycroft's. "I need to see Major Barrymore as soon as we get inside," said Sherlock to John when the guards left them unattended while checking their identification.

"Right."

"Shouldn't be too hard to start the search for the hound."

"Okay."

"The labs. Stapleton's first. Could be dangerous." At this moment the soldier came back and returned Sherlock's identification, and the gate slid noisily open on its mechanical track. They didn't speak as they drove to the main building.

Major Barrymore was not pleased to see them. "Oh, you know I'd love to," he said, after Sherlock explained what he needed. "I'd love to give you unlimited access to this place. Why not?"

Sherlock rolled his eyes. "It's a simple enough request, Major."

"I've never heard of anything so bizarre."

"You're to give me 24 hours, it's what I've—negotiated."

"Not a second more. I may have to comply with this order, but I don't have to like it. I don't know what the hell you expect to find here, anyway."

"Perhaps the truth."

"About what? Oh, I see. The big coat should've told me. You're one of the conspiracy lot, aren't you? Well, then, go ahead. Seek them out. The monsters, the death rays, the aliens."

"Have you got any of those? Just wondering."

"A couple. Crash-landed here in the 60s. We call them Abbot and Costello. Good luck, Mr Holmes."

Sherlock shut the door of the Major's office behind him.

While Sherlock was doing whatever it was he was doing—he'd tell John what it was when and if he felt like it, not before, so John hadn't pressed the point—John made his way down to Stapleton's lab, free of escorts or military babysitters. The labs he walked through were empty now, and not just of scientists and roving military personnel, but also of experimental equipment and lab animals. The few people he did see ducked quickly out of side doors. Perhaps they were hoping to prevent him from finding anything by leaving no trace of anything to find.

He remembered the general location of Stapleton's lab, but went through a wrong door anyway, and ended up in a sort of laboratory-cum-closet space with exposed pipes that were venting steam and what looked like an isolation/observation chamber. It was empty. Some of the pipes were labelled—Nitrogen Purge (N<sub>1</sub>), Chloride (Cl<sub>2</sub>), but not all. John made a mental note of them, in case Sherlock needed to balance chemical equations later. Taped to the wall were electric schematics, wrinkled and stained, and hand cranks that were neatly labelled with cardboard tags hanging on small metal chains. Grey-green steel cabinets lined one wall. It was a far cry from the bright white modern lab he'd come out of, and told John something of how long Baskerville had been huddling here in the Devon countryside. He let himself out of the closet, stepping through a cloud of steam, and back into a large, new laboratory. Before he could get his bearings and establish if he was in a new lab, or one he'd been in before, a set of floodlights turned on, blinding him.

And then an alarm started going off, blaring, so loud that he could feel his clothes vibrating under the soundwaves. He staggered towards a door, any door, and swiped the access card he'd gotten from the guard hut.

Access denied.

“Oh, come on,” he said, only he couldn't hear his own voice over the alarm. He swiped again.

Access denied.

Access denied.

Then, all at once, the alarm and the lights turned off at the same time, and John was left standing in the silent dark. His ears were ringing, and afterimages of the floodlights danced in front of his vision. He pushed his fingers against his eyelids, trying to clear his retinas. “Hello?” he called. A faint metal-on-metal rattle was the only response. He pulled his torch out of his pocket and flipped it on. The beam found a row of something tall—taller than him—and square, covered with white drop cloths. He pulled one aside to reveal an empty cage, about half the size of a common jail cell.

Another metal sound—something being dropped?—made him turn around, but the torch beam found nothing. He was alone. He flipped back another drop cloth to reveal another empty cage.

As he pulled back a third drop cloth, though, a monkey flew at him, screaming, scrabbling at the bars of the cage. John retreated a few hasty, startled steps, then stopped. Only a monkey. Small, tan, maned little thing like you see in zoos. He looked down at the fourth and final cage, and stopped.

This cage was also covered by a drop cloth, though only partially. At the bottom corner of the cage, the cloth had been pushed aside, and John could see where the two-inch steel tubing that framed the door had been brutally bent and pushed outward from the inside. The door was separated from the

wall of the cage by a triangular gap that was over a foot across at the bottom. Big enough for something of fairly substantial size to go through. Something that, he suspected, was not a monkey.

And then he heard it, just for a moment. A deep, throaty growl.

He made his way to the nearest door and swiped his card.

Access denied.

“No,” he said, trying again. Access denied. He pulled futilely on the door handle, then pulled his cell phone out of his pocket, surprised but relieved to see that he had service. Baskerville must have installed signal boosters throughout the base so that, even four levels underground, scientists were still reachable. He called Sherlock, who did not pick up. He put the phone back in his pocket, cursing, and then he heard another sound. The light clatter of canine fingernails on tile floors. In the reverberant, metal environment of the lab, it was hard to tell what direction the sound was coming from. As quickly and quietly as he could, he crossed the room to another door, spinning around when he heard the deep, rumbling growl, but unable to catch whatever was making the noise in the beam of his torch. It was stalking him, and he couldn’t see it. He could hear it, but not see it. He put his hand over his mouth to keep the panic locked down, and then broke for the cages along the wall. He scrambled into a cage—it was tall enough to stand in—and reached through the bars to lock himself in. He pulled the drop cloth back down and retreated as far from the door as he could, hand over his mouth, cold sweat trickling between his shoulder blades, his breath coming in short, shaky wheezes. He would not scream. He would not. He would not.

When his phone rang, he scrambled to find it in shaky relief. It was Sherlock. He didn’t give Sherlock a chance to say anything. “It’s here,” he breathed into the phone. “It’s in here with me.”

“Where are you?”

“Get me out, Sherlock. You’ve got to get me out. The big lab, the first lab that we saw.” He heard the growl—Jesus, it sounded like it was the size of a lion—and clapped his hand over his mouth again.

“John. John?”

“Right now, Sherlock. Please.” His voice hiccupped in fear.

“All right, I’ll find you. Keep talking.”

“I can’t, he’ll hear me.”

“*Keep talking.* What are you seeing?”

John tried to look out through the gap where the drop cloth hung imperfectly.

“John?”

“Yes, I’m here.”

“What can you see?”

“I don’t know. I don’t know, but I can hear it.” The thing growled, so close, so close. “Did you hear that?”

“Stay calm, *stay calm*. Can you see it?” When John didn’t answer, he repeated, “Can you see it?”

“No,” said John, staring through the gap in the curtains. And then he could, and he retreated. “I can see it,” he told Sherlock. “It’s here. It’s here.” He could see the shadow of the big, hulking thing, a hunched silhouette just on the other side of the curtain.

And then, all at once, the lights snapped on, the cloth was swept aside, and Sherlock was opening the cage door to let him out. “Are you all right?” he asked, putting a hand on John’s shoulder. “John—“

“*Jesus Christ*,” cursed John, hauling himself up and scrambling out of the cage. “It was the hound, Sherlock, it was here.” He was out of breath, spinning around the bright lab that had turned into a totally different place in just seconds. “I swear it, Sherlock, it must—it must—did you see it, you must have?”

“It’s all right,” said Sherlock quietly. “It’s okay now.”

“No, it’s not! It’s not okay!” shouted John in angry panic. “I *saw* it, and I was *wrong*.”

Sherlock, incredibly, had a hint of a smile around his mouth. “Let’s not jump to conclusions.”

“What?” asked John.

“What did you see?” asked Sherlock.

“I told you, I saw the hound.”

“Huge, red eyes?”

“Yes.”

“Glowing?”

“Yeah.”

Sherlock was truly smiling now. “No.”

“What?”

“I made up the bit about glowing. You saw what you expected to see because I told you. You’ve been drugged. We’ve all been drugged.”

“Drugged?” gaped John.

“Can you walk?”

“Course I can walk.”

“Come on, then. It’s time to lay this ghost.” He turned and left the lab and John, still struggling to catch his breath as his fear subsided, followed him out.

Dr Stapleton was examining a white, fluffy rabbit when they entered her lab. She did not look entirely surprised to see them. "Oh, back again," she said by way of a greeting. "What's on your mind this time?"

"Murder, Dr Stapleton. Refined, cold blooded murder." He flipped off the lights, and they all stared for a moment at the phosphorescent green bunny rabbit. Sherlock turned the lights back on. "Are you telling Kirsty what happened to Bluebell, or shall I?"

She took in a long, slow breath. "Okay. What do you want?"

"Can I borrow your microscope?"

Sherlock's body language made it clear that he wanted to be left alone at the microscope, so John sat on a lab stool some distance away as Sherlock crushed up a white substance he'd been carrying in a bag in his pocket and alternated between looking at slides on the microscope and scribbling on a nearby whiteboard. Dr Stapleton leaned on a lab table next to John.

"Are you sure you're okay?" she asked him. "You look very peaky."

"No, I'm alright."

"It was the GFD gene from a jellyfish, in case you were interested."

"What?"

"In the rabbits. I call her Victoria, if you really want to know."

"Why?"

"Why not? We don't ask questions like that here. It isn't done. It was a mix-up anyway. My daughter ended up with one of the lab specimens. So poor Bluebell had to go."

"Your compassion's overwhelming."

"I know. I hate myself sometimes." She smiled at him.

"So, come on, then," John asked, leaning on the table. "You can trust me, I'm a doctor. What else have you got hidden away up here?"

She sighed. "Listen, if you can imagine it, someone is probably doing it somewhere. Of course they are."

"Cloning?"

"Yes, of course. Dolly the sheep, remember?"

"Human clone?"

"Why not?"

"What about animals? Not sheep. Big animals?"

“Size isn’t a problem. Not at all. The only limits are ethics and the law and both of those things can be very flexible. But not here. Not at Baskerville.”

Sherlock interrupted by standing up and hurling his slides against the wall, where they shattered. “There’s nothing there! It doesn’t make any sense!” He started pacing angrily.

“What were you expecting to find?” asked Stapleton.

“Drugs, of course. It has to be a drug. A hallucinogenic or a deliriant of some kind. There’s no trace of anything in the sugar.”

“Sugar?” asked John, looking up.

“Sugar, yes, it’s the process of elimination. I saw the hound. Saw it as my imagination expected me to see it. A genetically engineered monster. But I knew I couldn’t believe the evidence of my own eyes, so there were seven possible reasons for it, the most possible being narcotics. Henry Knight, he saw it too. But you didn’t, John. You didn’t see it. Now, we have eaten and drunk exactly the same thing since we got to Grimpen apart from one thing—you don’t take sugar in your coffee.”

“I see. So—“

“I took it from Henry’s kitchen. His sugar. It’s perfectly all right.”

“But—maybe it’s not a drug.”

“No, it *has* to be a drug.” He sat on the lab stool and momentarily buried his face in his hands. “How did it get into our systems? How?” His eyes were shut and his head tilted, as if he was listening to a sound audible only to himself. “It has to be something. Something...something buried deep.” He opened his eyes and looked at John and Dr Stapleton. “Get out,” he told them.

“What?” asked Stapleton.

“Get out, I need to go to my Mind Palace.”

“Your *what?*” asked Stapleton.

John stood up and grabbed his jacket. “He’s not going to be doing much talking for awhile. We may as well go.”

Stapleton followed him out. “His what?”

“His Mind Palace. It’s a memory technique. A sort of mental map. You plot a map with a location—it doesn’t have to be a real place—and you deposit memories there that—theoretically, you never forget anything, all you have to do is find your way back through it.”

“So this imaginary location can be anything? A house or a street?” she asked.

“Yeah.”

“It’s a palace, he said it was a palace.”

“Yeah, well, he would, wouldn’t he?”

Once they were gone, Sherlock settled in, wandering aimlessly through the palace at first, letting aspects of the case drift through the hallways like vapour, bumping into drawers and display cases.

Hound. Why hound? Why not dog?

*Hound*

*Hound*

*Hound*

*Liberty*

*Liberty Bell*

*Liberty Pattern*

*Liberty Fraternite*

*Liberty*

*Liberty*

*Liberty*

*Liberty Pattern*

*Liberty London*

*Liberté*

*Fraternité*

*Egalité*

*Liberty Bell*

*Liberty Bell March*

*Liberty*

*John Phillip Sousa*

*Liberty*

*Liberty Liberty*

*Liberty*

*Hound*

*In*

*Inn*

*India*

*Ingolstadt*

*Hound*

*Indium, atomic number 49*

*Ridgeback*

*Hound Dog*

*Wolfhound*

*Elvis Presley*

*Hound*

*Liberty, Indiana.*

*H.O.U.N.D.*

Sherlock's shoulders relaxed and his eyes opened. He had it. Almost all of it.

*Henry was running through a field, running, running, his breath catching in his chest, his screams tearing his throat raw even before they reached his mouth. Behind him ran the hound, dark eyes gleaming a malevolent red, snarling, laughing. It was playing with him. It was running him to exhaustion, then it would pounce.*

*He looked down, and realized he had a gun in his hand, cold and heavy.*

*He turned to face the hound. He squeezed the trigger.*

The sound of the gunshot, and of shattering glass, woke him. He was not on the moor. There was no hound. He was in his sitting room, standing in front of the floor-to-ceiling mirror, which was splintered and shattered. Dr Mortimer was huddled on the floor, in front of the mirror, crying.

He blinked, dazed and blank.

Why was she crying?

Why was he holding a gun?

The sharp smell of gunpowder tingled in his nostrils.

“Oh, god,” he moaned. “Oh my god. Oh my god, oh my god, I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. I’m sorry.” He ran out of the room, leaving Dr Mortimer alone.

Sherlock found John and Stapleton and led them to the security offices next door to Barrymore’s office. All along one side of the room were monitors showing security camera feeds, but this room was also where all of the primary equipment for Baskerville’s various databases was stored and available—servers and Internet lines and security hardware, all came through this office. There were several terminals that scientists could use for research or reference if necessary.

“John?” reminded Sherlock.

“Yeah, I’m on it,” said John, leaning next to the door and keeping an eye on the hallway, to give warning of anyone coming. Most of the staff had gone home for the day.

“Project H.O.U.N.D. I must’ve read about it, stored it away. An experiment in a CIA facility in Liberty, Indiana.”

Stapleton sat at a terminal and typed in her credentials.

Stapleton\_5655//125

xx14

The computer instructed her to Enter Search String. She looked at Sherlock inquiringly.

“HOUND,” Sherlock told her. She typed it in and the computer’s thinking icon spun around for a moment, then an alert came up.

NO ACCESS. CIA Classified.

Auth Code \_\_\_\_\_

“That’s as far as my access goes, I’m afraid,” she told him.

“There must be an override. A password,” said John from the door.

“I imagine so, but that’d be Major Barrymore’s.”

There was a door in the wall of the office so that Barrymore could pass from the security area to his own office without having to enter the hall. Sherlock went into Barrymore's office and sat in his desk chair. "Password, password...password. He sat here when he thought it up." He scanned all the materials on the walls and the desktop. "Describe him to me," he said to Stapleton.

"You've seen him."

"Describe *him*."

"Um. He's bloody Martinette. A throwback. The sort they'd have sent into Suez."

"Good. Excellent. Old-fashioned. Traditional. Not the sort of man that'd use his children's names as a password. Loves his job, proud of it, and this is work related, so...what's at eye level? Books. Jane's *Defence Weekly*, bound copies. Hannibal. Wellington. Rommel. Churchill's *History of English-Speaking Peoples*, all four volumes. Churchill. He's fond of Churchill. Copy of *The Downing Street Years*. One two three four *five* separate biographies of Thatcher." His eyes fell on a photograph, discoloured with age, framed on the bookshelf. "Mid-1980s at a guess? Father and son, Barrymore Senior. Medals, distinguished service order."

"That date? I'd say Falkland's veteran," put in John from the doorway.

"Right. So. Thatcher's looking more likely bet than Churchill."

"So...that's the password?"

"No, with a man like Major Barrymore only first name terms will do." He leaned over the terminal and typed MARGARET into the password box. Then, after a beat of thought, he deleted MARGARET and typed MAGGIE.

The whole of Baskerville's digital files on Project H.O.U.N.D. opened to him. Reports from Indiana. Brain scans and chemical equations. Profiles of experimental subjects, describing their "extreme suggestibility," reactions to fear and stimulus, terror conditioning. Descriptions of aerosol dispersal mechanisms. Autopsy photos. Group photos of scientists who had been involved in the original experiments in the Liberty facility, helpfully labelled with first and last names.

When you took the first letter of each researcher's last name and arranged them correctly, they spelled H.O.U.N.D.

Stapleton saw it too. "Hound," she said, sounding awed. Sherlock continued paging through the digital files. Phrases leapt out at him as he scanned.

Severe paranoia.

Behaviour modification "therapies."

Photos of test subjects screaming in fear. Hurting themselves.

Severe frontal lobe damage...blood-brain barrier...dangerous acceleration...gross cranial trauma...multiple homicide.

“Jesus,” said John, who had left the door and was reading over Sherlock’s shoulder.

“Project Hound,” said Sherlock. “New deleriant drug. Rendered its users incredibly suggestible. They wanted to use it as an anti-personnel weapon. Totally disorient the enemy using fear and stimulus. But they shut it down and hid it away in 1986.”

“Because of what it did to the subjects they tested it on,” said Stapleton.

“And what they did to others. Prolonged exposure drove them insane. Made them almost uncontrollably aggressive.” Sherlock was scanning a police report from nearby Connersville, Indiana, detailing the murder of three people in a convenience store by an unarmed man.

“So someone’s been doing it again? Carrying on the experiment?” said John.

“Attempting to refine it, perhaps. For the last twenty years.”

“Who?” asked Stapleton.

John nodded at the group photo. “Those names mean anything to you?” he asked her.

Stapleton shook her head. “No, not a thing.”

Sherlock sighed. “Five principle scientists. Twenty years ago. Maybe our friend’s somewhere in the back of the picture. Someone who was old enough to be there at the time of the experiments in 1986.” He paused. “Maybe somebody who says ‘cell phone’ because of time spent in America. You remember, John?”

John nodded.

“He gave us his number in case we needed him.”

Stapleton saw him in the picture. “Oh my god, Bob Frankland,” she said. “But Bob doesn’t even on—I mean, he’s a virologist. This was chemical warfare.”

“It’s where he started, then. And he’s never lost the certainty, the obsession, that that drug really could work. Nice of him to give us his number. Let’s arrange a little meeting.” He stood up straight and started to leave, but stopped when John’s mobile rang.

It wasn’t a familiar number. “Hello?” said John.

All that came through from the other end was sobbing.

“Who’s this?”

“You’ve got to find Henry,” the other person said, and through the tears he recognized Henry’s therapist.

“Louise? What’s wrong?”

“Henry was...was remembering and he...he tried...he’s got a gun. He went for the gun and tried to—“ She dissolved into sobs.

“What?”

“He’s gone. You’ve got to stop him, I don’t know what he might do.”

“Where are you?”

“His house. I’m okay. I’m okay.”

“Right. Stay there, we’ll get someone to you, okay?” He disconnected the call.

“Henry?” asked Sherlock.

“He’s attacked her.”

“Gone?”

John nodded.

“There’s only one place he’ll go to. Back to where it all started.” He dialled his phone and a moment later spoke into it. “Lestrade, get to the Hollow. Dewar’s Hollow, now. And bring a gun.” He and John ran out of Baskerville to the rental car, Stapleton staring after them, as the sun sank in the west.

Henry stumbled toward the hollow through the dark like a sleepwalker. The gun dangled loosely from his hand. He didn’t walk quickly, didn’t care about being quiet. He wanted the hound to find him. He wanted the hound to take him, and end it. He let his legs lead him slowly, inexorably, down to the bottom of the hollow. To the spot where he’d seen his dad torn apart.

“I’m sorry. So sorry, Dad.” He knelt on the ground. He felt strangely quiet, though his brain was quivering, unable to focus on anything. The gun went, almost of its own accord, into his mouth.

“Henry! No, Henry, no!” It was Sherlock Holmes, skidding down the slope into the hollow, John just behind him, both holding torches.

He scrambled to his feet and staggered backwards. “Get back! Get away from me!” he screamed, brandishing the pistol wildly at them.

“Easy, Henry. Easy, just relax,” said John.

“I know what I am. I know what I tried to do!” Henry sobbed, pointing the gun at them.

“Just put the gun down, it’s okay,” said John.

“No, no, I know what I am!”

“Yes,” said Sherlock, his voice calm, “I’m sure you do, Henry. It’s all been explained to you, hasn’t it? Explained very carefully.”

This brought Henry up short, and he stared at Sherlock. “What?”

“Someone needed to keep you quiet. Needed to keep you as a child. To reassert the dream that you both clung onto because you had started to remember. Remember now, Henry. You’ve got to remember. What happened here when you were a little boy?”

“I thought...it had got my dad. The hound. I...oh, oh, Jesus, I don’t know anymore! I don’t!” His scream faded into a moan and the gun went back into his mouth.

“Henry! Henry, for god’s sake—“ said John, starting forward.

Sherlock cut him off. “Henry, *remember!* Liberty In. Two words. Two words a frightened little boy saw here twenty years ago. You’d started to piece things together, to remember what really happened here that night. It wasn’t an animal, was it, Henry?”

Henry looked at Sherlock in total confusion, and then, recognition.

“Not a monster,” said Sherlock. “A man.”

A man, thought Henry. A man with no face. But with fly eyes. *A gas mask*, his adult brain told his childhood memory. Wrestling with his dad. Fighting him. Hitting him over the head with a rock. The dull, sickening crunch of his father’s skull. The t-shirt with a snarling dog on it, and the name of the city. Liberty, Indiana.

“You couldn’t cope. You were just a child. So you rationalized it into something very different. Then you started to remember, so you had to be stopped. Driven out of your mind so that no one would believe a word that you said.”

“Sherlock!” called a voice from the top of the hollow. It was Lestrade, clambering down the hill towards them. Henry startled at the sound of the voice, looking up at Lestrade, and John took a hasty step forward and took the gun from Henry’s limp hand. “It’s okay, mate,” he said.

“But we saw it,” said Henry to Sherlock. “The hound. Last night. We did, we saw—“

“There was a dog, Henry. Leaving footprints, scaring witnesses. But it was nothing more than an ordinary dog. We both saw it, saw it as our drugged minds wanted us to see it. Fear and stimulus. That’s how it works. But there never was any monster.”

At this moment, just when Henry looked like he was about to start believing Sherlock, an unearthly howl rose from the moor. John looked up and saw, or thought he saw, the back and shoulders of a creature stalking the rim of the hollow. “Sherlock—?”

Henry fell to pieces. “No, no, no, no—“

“Henry—“

“—no no NO NO NO NO *NO!*” Henry dropped to his knees, his voice disintegrating into a hoarse, wordless howl.

Knowing it wasn't real, and knowing that the group would collapse if he panicked as well, helped John keep his head. He turned away from the creature—now creeping down the hill towards them—and looked at Lestrade. “Are you seeing this?” he asked. Lestrade’s wide eyes were answer enough. “All right, *he’s* not drugged, Sherlock. So what’s that?” Sherlock didn’t answer. “What is it?”

“All right! It’s still here. But it’s just a dog. Henry! It’s nothing more than an ordinary dog!”

“God—“ said Lestrade.

Sherlock turned a bit to look at Lestrade, and that was when he saw the fifth person, wearing a gas mask, creeping up on them from the back side of the hollow. He ran forward and, in a single sudden movement, yanked the gas mask off the person’s face.

James Moriarty’s mad rictus grin looked back at him. Moriarty, making the same snarling noise as the dog at the top of the hollow.

“No,” said Sherlock, to his own disobeying brain as much as to Moriarty. “Not you!” Moriarty’s face flickered and fractured in front of him. “Not you!” He grabbed Moriarty and spun him around and his vision—and his brain—cleared for a moment. Just long enough for him to perceive Frankland, with his hand pressed over his mouth and nose, and that was enough for Sherlock to see everything. “The fog!”

“What?” said John.

“It’s the fog! The drug, it’s in the fog. Aerosol dispersal, that’s what it said in those records. Project Hound. It’s the fog. A chemical minefield!”

Frankland was staring at the dog now, too—or whatever it was. “For god’s sakes, kill it,” he cried. “Kill it!” Then the dog was leaping, and John and Lestrade were both firing their guns, and the dog collapsed with a whimper.

Silence fell in the hollow.

Sherlock pulled Henry forward. “Look at it, Henry.”

“No—no—no—“

“Come on, look at it.”

Henry looked. A plain black dog, now perfectly still. “It’s just...” He turned slowly and looked at Frankland for a long moment, then leapt for him with a wild, shrill scream. He knocked Frankland over and his hands found Frankland’s throat. “Twenty years!” he screamed. “Twenty years of my life making no sense!” Lestrade and John pulled Henry off of Frankland. “Why didn’t you just *kill me?*” sobbed Henry.

“Because dead men get listened to,” Sherlock told him. “He needed to do more than kill you. He had to discredit every word you ever said about your father. And he had the means right at his feet. A

chemical minefield. Pressure pads in the ground, dosing you up, every time you came back here. Murder weapon, scene of the crime, all in one.” Sherlock’s voice broke into a laugh. “Oh, this case, Henry. Thank you. It’s been brilliant.”

“Sherlock—“ said John quietly. He still had a hand on Henry’s shoulder to make sure the man stayed upright.

“What?”

“Timing.”

Sherlock blinked. “Not good?”

“No, no, it’s okay,” said Henry, sounding weary. “It’s fine. Because this means—“ He turned back to Frankland, and John and Lestrade both took a step to place themselves between Henry and Frankland, “—this means that my dad was *right*. He’d found something out, hadn’t he? And that’s why you killed him. Because he was right. And he found you right in the middle of an experiment—“

A snarl caused them all to whip around. The dog was back on its feet, teeth bared. John reacted, pulling his gun and firing two shots, and the dog crumpled to the forest floor. When he turned back, Frankland had taken advantage of the momentary distraction to run back the way he’d come.

“Frankland!” Sherlock shouted, giving chase. John, Henry, and Lestrade followed as fast as they could. Frankland dashed headlong through the wood, then clambered, with a stumbling leap, over the razor wire that was the border of the Baskerville minefield. He’d gone barely twenty yards when he felt a click under his foot and stopped dead.

He let out a long, slow breath. So this was the end.

He lifted his foot, and the mine exploded in a shower of smoke and fire and dirt.

Henry collapsed against a tree. He didn’t take his eyes away from the spot where Frankland had existed just moments before. The screaming in his head, after all these years, had finally stopped.

The next morning, Sherlock brought coffee to John, who was eating breakfast at one of the outside tables. “So they didn’t have it put down, then,” said Sherlock. “The dog.”

“Obviously. Suppose they just couldn’t bring themselves to do it.”

“I see.”

“No, you don’t,” contradicted John.

“No. I don’t. Sentiment?”

John nodded. “Sentiment.”

Sherlock sat down and sipped his coffee.

“Listen,” asked John, “What happened to me in the lab?”

There was a small pause, then Sherlock asked, “Do you want some sauce with that?” He handed John condiments to put on his breakfast.

“I mean, I hadn’t been to the Hollow, so how come I heard those things in there? Fear and stimulus, you said.”

“You must have been dosed with it elsewhere. You went to the lab. You saw those pipes. Pretty ancient. Leaky as a sieve. They were carrying the gas, so...ketchup, was it, or brown?”

“Hang on. You thought it was in the sugar. You were convinced it was in the sugar.”

“Better get going, actually. There’s a train that leaves in half an hour, so if you want—“

“Oh, god,” said John in resignation. “It was you. You locked me in that bloody lab.”

“I had to. It was an experiment.”

“An experiment!” John’s voice rose, and Sherlock shushed him, looking around for eavesdroppers. “I was terrified, Sherlock, I was scared to death!”

“I thought the drug was in the sugar so I put sugar in your coffee. Then I arranged everything with Major Barrymore. It was all totally scientific laboratory conditions. Quite literally. I knew what effect it had had on a superior mind, so I needed to try it on an average one. You know what I mean,” he added as John looked at him, exasperated.

“But it wasn’t in the sugar.”

“No, well, how was I to know you’d already been exposed to the gas?”

“So you got it wrong.”

“No.”

“Mhmm. You were wrong. It wasn’t in the sugar. You got it wrong.”

“A bit,” conceded Sherlock. “It won’t happen again.”

“Any long term effects?”

“It’s all fine once you’ve excreted it. You will.”

“I think I might’ve taken care of that already.”

Sherlock smiled and then, seeing Gary the proprietor refilling coffee mugs, stood up.

“Where are you going?” asked John.

“Won’t be a minute. Got to see a man about a dog,” He crossed the yard to Gary, his trench coat billowing behind him.

## CANONICAL NOTES

*The Hounds of Baskerville*—This, of course, is taken from the novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, published in 1902 (while Holmes was technically dead, but this story takes place before the events of “The Final Problem”).

“*You went on the tube like that?*” In “The Adventure of Black Peter,” Holmes comes into Baker Street as Watson is sitting down to breakfast, “his hat upon his head and a huge barbed-headed spear tucked like an umbrella under his arm.” There is no mention of whether he is covered in blood.

“*Nothing of importance?*” Holmes asks this of Watson in the Canon as well, in “The Adventure of the Bruce Partington Plans,” who tells us that he was “aware that by anything of interest, Holmes meant anything of criminal interest. There was news of a revolution, of a possible war, and of an impending change of government; but these did not come within the horizon of my companion.”

“*No. Cold turkey. We agreed.*” Watson expressed distaste for Holmes’ cocaine habit as early in the Canon as *The Sign of Four* and warned Holmes of its ill effects; by the time of “The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter,” Holmes had successfully kicked the habit with Watson’s help (as John is helping Sherlock quit smoking here), though Watson remained leery that the beast might rear its ugly head again.

“*I need something stronger than tea. Perhaps seven per cent stronger.*” In *The Sign of Four*, Watson asks what Holmes is injecting, “morphine or cocaine?” “It is cocaine, a seven-per-cent solution,” Holmes tells him. Nicholas Meyer wrote a really solid Holmes pastiche called *The Seven Per Cent Solution* in which Holmes goes to Vienna and meets Sigmund Freud (who was also addicted to cocaine).

“*Your mind. It’s so placid. Straightforward. Barely used. Mine’s like an engine. Racing out of control. A rocket tearing itself to pieces, trapped on the launch pad. I need a case.*” In “The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge,” Holmes tells Watson, “My mind is like a racing engine, tearing itself to pieces because it is not connected up with the work for which it was built. Life is commonplace; the papers are sterile; audacity and romance seem to have passed forever from the criminal world.” (He is, of course, immediately presented with a case which changes his mood completely.) In “The Adventure of the Three Gables,” Holmes declares that, “Anything is better than stagnation.”

“*Like a fairy, according to little Kirsty.*” This isn’t really Canon, but one of the more notorious things about Arthur Conan Doyle’s later years (somewhat inexplicably, since by most accounts he was a smart, stolid, straightforward person, and engaged in amateur detective work himself from time to time) was his belief in the veracity of the Cottingley Fairy photographs of 1917.

“*What am I saying? This is brilliant. Phone Lestrade. Tell him there’s an escaped rabbit.*” One of Holmes’ many expressions of boredom, this one from the beginning of “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches,” finds him lamenting, “Man, or at least criminal man, has lost all enterprise and originality. As to my own practice, it seems to be degenerating into an agency for recovering lost lead pencils and giving advice to young ladies from boarding schools.”

“*He introduced himself as Henry Knight.*” The character in the original story, of course, is Sir Henry Baskerville.

“*Yes. The TV interview. I prefer to do my own editing.*” In the original *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, it’s Dr Mortimer who initially comes to Holmes, not Henry. In the original story, Sir Charles Baskerville has died, and his heir has returned to England to live at Baskerville Hall—but Dr Mortimer is concerned that whatever killed Charles will also kill Henry. The danger to the heir immediately follows the demise of the antecedent. In *Sherlock*, the gap between the death of his dad and the danger to Henry’s own person is about twenty years (as John points out).

“*You came up from Devon on the first available train this morning.*” Holmes is occasionally able to deduce the urgency of a problem based on the time of arrival of his client, for example, in “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” he can tell by looking at Violet Stoner that she had an early start and rode in a dog cart before getting on an early train (indeed, she arrived at Baker Street not just before breakfast, but early enough to awaken the entire household from sleep).

“*That’s what Dr Mortimer says.*” Dr Mortimer is also in the original *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (as James, not Louise), though he’s a general practitioner, not a therapist—or alienist, as he would’ve been called back then. Mortimer’s primary role was as a physician to Sir Charles Baskerville, who dies at the story’s outset, and his role throughout the story is as friend and ally of Sir Henry Baskerville, who is being hunted by the monstrous hound that is the curse upon his family. (Maybe.)

*“Mr Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!”* This line is also in the original story (though said by Mortimer).

*“No, I can’t leave London at the moment. Far too busy. But don’t worry! I’m putting my best man onto it...I always rely on John to send me all the relevant data as he never understands a word of it himself.”* In the Canon, Holmes actually does send Watson alone to Devon to report on the facts to him before he can make an appearance (much of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is Watson’s letters to Holmes). Holmes does not return to the narrative until more than halfway through. It is curious that Holmes trusts Watson to convey all the relevant details (he does it again in “The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax,” when he sends Watson to France to try and track down a missing woman), when Watson has repeatedly shown himself to be incapable of drawing the correct conclusions from the evidence that he encounters—but then, seeing and reporting is a different skill than drawing conclusions, and it’s to Holmes’ credit that he can appreciate this (and for all that he criticizes Watson’s writing, he doesn’t hesitate to make use of the skill that Watson has).

*“So that must be—yes. Dewar’s Hollow.”* This scene combines two elements from the original story—Holmes and Watson consulting a map of the moor to get the lay of the land, and Holmes standing on a tor, silhouetted against the sky.

*“Stay away from the moor at night if you value your lives.”* Sir Henry Baskerville receives an anonymous note at the beginning of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*: “As you value your life of your reason keep away from the moor.” Even Sherlock Holmes, generally immune to any suggestion of supernatural devilry, tells Sir Henry to “avoid the moor in those hours of darkness when the powers of evil are exalted.”

*“The Great Grimpen Minefield, they call it.”* In the original story, rather than a minefield, the dangerous area on the moor is called the Great Grimpen Mire. Watson is warned away from it by Stapleton, the naturalist. “A false step yonder means death to man or beast.”

*“What with the monster and the ruddy prisoner, I don’t know how we sleep nights.”* This is the only mention of Selden, an escaped prisoner loose on the moor who figures into the original story.

*“I’ve told you—he practically is the British government.”* Holmes says this almost verbatim to Watson in “The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans,” while describing Mycroft’s function in his government job.

*“Sir. Major Barrymore won’t be pleased, sir. He’ll want to see you both.”* In the Canon story, Baskerville Hall is a large manor house, not a military base, and the Barrymores (husband and wife) are the butler and housekeeper, descendents of a family who have worked for the Baskerville family for at least four generations. Barrymore is bearded in the Canon story as well as on the show (something that would be unusual, but not forbidden, for a British military officer). Other characters lurking around Baskerville who also appear, in slightly different iterations, in the original story are Stapleton (in the Canon a naturalist studying the moor) and Frankland (a crotchety old man whose chief diversion in life is taking his neighbours to court).

*“Haven’t pulled rank in ages.”* In this scene (as in others), Sherlock brings John into a situation with no heads up or prior discussion as to his game plan. Instead, John discovers Sherlock’s plan to fake their way into Baskerville when they are sitting at the gate of the complex. In “The Reigate Puzzle,” Holmes stumbles into a water jug and shatters it, and blames it on Watson, who plays along with no questions asked, having worked with Holmes long enough to know that a) there’s a reason why Holmes is acting the way he is, even if Watson doesn’t understand it; and b) Holmes will explain himself eventually. It’s also possible that Holmes knows that Watson is better at lying on the spot; when asked to come up with stories in advance (as in “The Adventure of the Illustrious Client,”) he tends to give himself away.

*“He held up his notebook in front of her face. On it he had written a single word. BLUEBELL.”* In the Canon, Holmes occasionally uses notes (sometimes notes of just a single word) to get reticent people to talk to him. In “The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier,” Holmes shows with a single written word that he already knows the secret that the antagonist in the story has been trying to keep, leading the antagonist to agree to talk with him. In “The Adventure of the Three Gables,” Holmes asks a woman who is refusing to talk to him (via written note), “Shall it be the police, then?”

*“Henry Knight, it turned out, lived in an 18<sup>th</sup> century manor house—or rather, he lived in a modern house that was clumsily clapped on to one end of the manor house.”* This (surprisingly, to me, since I hadn’t remembered it before re-reading *Hound*) is true to canon. Watson tells us that, “The lodge was a ruin of black granite and bared ribs of rafters, but facing us was a new building, half-constructed, the first fruit of Sir Charles’s South African gold.” The house itself has a central wing that is 500 years old, and more modern wings to either side.

*“You want me to go out there at night?”* As noted above, Henry Baskerville is warned in the Canon—by Holmes himself—against going about on his own, particularly at night, particularly on the moor. However, Holmes’ eventual plan does basically boil down to sending Henry Baskerville out onto the moor to be attacked, and bring events to a head.

*UMQRA.* In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Barrymore flashes a candle in front of a window to communicate with somebody on the moor at night. There is no specific code; the candle is merely a notification of presence. John, Army vet that he is, would know Morse code and make the logical inference from the flashing lights on the moor.

*“The fog wasn’t thick on the moor, but it had settled in the Hollow like a puddle, blurring the edges of everything.”* The fog also figures into the original climax, complicating Holmes’ and Watson’s intention to destroy the Hound (or whatever) before it kills Sir Henry by eliminating visibility. In the canon story, there is a hollow on the moor of sorts; Sir Hugo Baskerville—in the time of the English Civil War—has set his dogs upon a young female servant of the house, who spurned his unwanted advances and is attempting to flee across the moor. “[The dogs], though known for their valour and their breed, were whimpering in a cluster at the head of a deep dip or goyal, as we call it, upon the moor, some slinking away and some, with starting hackles and staring eyes, gazing down the narrow valley before them... The moon was shining bright upon the clearing and there in the centre lay the unhappy maid where she had fallen, dead of fear or fatigue... The body of Hugo Baskerville [was] lying near her... standing over Hugo, and plucking at his throat, there stood a foul thing, a great, black beast, shaped like a hound, yet larger than any hound that any mortal eye has rested upon.”

*“Look, Sherlock—we have to be rational about this.”* The fact that John, however much he trusts Sherlock’s ability to observe, does not believe for a moment in a demonic hound speaks volumes to his personality’s grounding in common sense and straightforward reality—something consistent with Canon Watson.

*“Once you rule out the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be true.”* Holmes says this over and over again (or slight variations on it) throughout the Canon: In *The Sign of Four* (twice), “The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet,” “The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans,” and “The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier.” In “The Adventure of the Priory School,” after stating a hypothesis that Watson deems impossible, Holmes says, “A most illuminating remark. It *is* impossible as I state it, and therefore I must in some respect have stated it wrong. Yet you saw for yourself. Can you suggest any fallacy?”

*“Okay, what about his father? He wasn’t one of your patients. Wasn’t he some sort of...conspiracy nutter theorist?”* Sir Charles Baskerville, who in the original story is Sir Henry’s uncle, is described by Dr Mortimer as having “taken this legend [of the Hound of the Baskervilles] which I have read to you exceedingly to heart.”

*“Tell Sherlock I’ve been keeping an eye on Stapleton. Any time he wants a little chat.”* In the original, besides filing legal lawsuits against his neighbours for fun and profit, Frankland’s primary diversion is a telescope that he has on the roof of his house. He spends much of his time combing the moor looking for the escaped convict and spying on his neighbours. It is he who spies Holmes living on the moor and tells Watson.

*“Something had happened that he could not yet explain, and so his brain had registered it as a danger. If he could define it, it would cease to be a danger.”* This is a paraphrase of something that Holmes says to Watson in the original *Hound of the Baskervilles*: “What danger do you foresee?” “It would cease to be a danger if we could define it.”

*“It was doubt. I felt doubt. I’ve always been able to trust my senses, the evidence of my own eyes, until last night.”* In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Watson—though unable to come up with alternative hypotheses which do not involve a spectral, demonic hound—says, “Stapleton may fall in with such a superstition, and Mortimer also, but if I have one quality upon earth it is common sense, and nothing will persuade me to believe in such a thing.” Sherlock’s refusal to doubt himself reminds me of this.

*“No, I can’t believe that. But I did see it. So, the question is—How? How?”* As Holmes says in “The Adventure of the Priory School,” after stating a hypothesis that Watson deems impossible, Holmes says, “A most illuminating remark. It is impossible as I state it, and therefore I must in some respect have stated it wrong. Yet you saw for yourself. Can you suggest any fallacy?”

*“I don’t have friends. I’ve just got one.”* Besides many references to Holmes’ general anti-social nature, Holmes says something very like this in “The Five Orange Pips:” Upon hearing the doorbell on a dark and extremely stormy evening, Watson asks, “Who could come to-night? Some friend of yours, perhaps?” And Holmes replies, “Except yourself I have none. I do not encourage visitors.”

*“You’ve never been the most luminous of people, but as the conductor of light, you are unbeatable.”* Holmes’ comment to Watson in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is, “You are not yourself luminous, though you may be a conductor of light. Some people without possessing genius have a remarkable power of stimulating it.”

*“I’m on holiday, would you believe?”* Lestrade also shows up, more or less just in time for the finale, in the original *Hound of the Baskervilles*, though Holmes knows he’s coming (because Holmes asked him to come).

*“You’re brown as a nut. You’re clearly just back from your holidays.”* A paraphrase from *A Study in Scarlet* when Stamford says to Watson, “What have you been doing with yourself, Watson? You’re thin as a lath and as brown as a nut.”

*“Is that why you’re calling yourself Greg?”* Canon Lestrade’s first name is never actually revealed, though his first initial is in fact G.

*“Was an old mineshaft. It’s not far. He was all right there.”* The actions of the innkeepers—secretly keeping a large dog on the moor and aggravating rumours of the Hound—echo those of the actual criminal in the original story.

*“Had burning red eyes and it was glowing, John, its whole body was glowing.”* When the hound makes the scene in the climax of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Watson describes it thusly: “A hound it was, an enormous coal-black hound, but not such a hound as mortal eyes have ever seen. Fire burst from its open mouth, its eyes glowed with a smouldering glare, its muzzle and hackles and dewlap were outlined in flickering flame. Never in the delirious dream of a disordered brain could anything more savage, more appalling, more hellish be conceived than that dark form and savage face which broke upon us out of the wall of fog.” The glowing turns out to be (spoiler alert) phosphorous, which the dog’s master has painted all over the canine’s body. In “The Hounds of Baskerville,” of course, the glowing animals are bunnies, and the delirious dreams of disordered brains do much to populate the moor with hounds.

*“I knew I couldn’t believe the evidence of my own eyes, so there were seven possible reasons for it, the most possible being narcotics.”* Another example of Sherlock having seven explanations for everything (see the note in “The Great Game” annotations; Sherlock also says something similar in “A Scandal In Belgravia,” when bent over the body in the trunk).

“*Get out, I need to go to my Mind Palace.*” The “method of loci” is a legitimate and well-known (relatively speaking) technique used for memorization, and dates at least as far back as ancient Roman times. It can be called the method of loci, a memory palace, or the journey method. John explains it fairly well, if succinctly—the person visualizes a place, called a memory map. It could be a building, or a series of shops, or any geographical place with a number of distinct units or places. The person then associates the information that he doesn’t want to forget with an individual place inside the memory map, and the association of information with place makes it easier to recall when it’s needed. Many World Memory Champions use this technique to memorize long strings of digits or other information. It is, in essence, a spatial mnemonic instead of the alphanumeric ones we often learn in elementary school (ROY G BIV for the rainbow, All Good Boys Deserve Fudge/FACE for the notes on the musical staff, etc). In the Canon, Holmes does not explicitly have Mind Palace, but he does refer to his “brain attic,” which he endeavours to keep organized: “I consider that a man's brain originally is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose. A fool takes in all the lumber of every sort that he comes across, so that the knowledge which might be useful to him gets crowded out, or at best is jumbled up with a lot of other things, so that he has a difficulty in laying his hands upon it. Now the skilful workman is very careful indeed as to what he takes into his brain-attic. He will have nothing but the tools which may help him in doing his work, but of these he has a large assortment, and all in the most perfect order.” (*A Study in Scarlet*)

“*Prolonged exposure drove them insane. Made them almost uncontrollably aggressive.*” In the Canon, Henry Baskerville ends his adventure on Dartmoor with his health ruined, and at the end of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* must go on a long sea voyage to recover his health. Henry Knight, in *Sherlock*, starts out distinctly more vulnerable than his namesake, but could now, at the end, finally be at a point to start recovering his mental health—particularly if, as Sherlock hypothesizes, Henry will be able to excrete the poison from his system and be left with no lasting physiological effects.

“*For god’s sakes, kill it. Kill it!*” In the Canon, it is Watson and Holmes who fire first, and Holmes who eventually kills the dog.

“*He’d gone barely twenty yards when he felt a click under his foot and stopped dead.*” In the Canon, the villain runs into the Great Grimpen Mire trying to escape from Holmes and Watson, and sinks into the bog.

## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

### **WHAT SHERLOCK GAVE ME (PART TWO)**

At the curvy road sign, I'm told, I'll see a driveway, and I should turn left there. When I climb out of the car, I'm greeted with cool mountain smells, and cricket chirps, and hugs. I'm handed a hamburger with Swiss cheese melted on it, held between two halves of English muffin, and pointed toward avocado, homemade basil pesto, and roasted onions to dress it up with. Still munching, I'm shuffled back into my shoes (I'd taken them off at the door) and taken for a stroll down near the river, handed St John's Wort and tangy, minty weeds to taste. We go by a homemade trebuchet but don't fire it. I go across a pond on a log, stiff and cautious, and I have to crouch halfway across and take deep, relaxing breaths. My friend waits patiently on the other side, saying nothing, but waiting to make sure I get across okay.

Back at the house (safe and dry, and really, if I'd fallen, it would've been my own stiff clumsy fault, and not the log's) I'm given another burger, this one lamb, and a beer, and a piece of yucca, which tastes kind of like dehydrated cucumber. Like if NASA wanted to make cucumber-flavoured astronaut ice cream. The house is big, I suppose, but it's hard to tell, because the floor plan is defined by the hill on which the house sits, so everything is around corners and up steps and through Jack-and-Jill bathrooms. There's no cell phone service.

We dish up bowls of ice cream and go downstairs in stocking feet, spreading out between a couch and a bed. *Sherlock*, the BBC version, is projected onto a blank wall. There's an electrical outlet on the wall that keeps wandering across my attention at odd moments. I've seen "The Hounds of Baskerville" before but never watched it with people, and the funny moments are funnier, the startling moments are more startling because the person next to me hasn't seen it and is jumping in surprise. There's conversation afterward. Explanation. Discussion of this episode vs. Doyle's original. Plans for the next episode. I've seen "The Reichenbach Fall," but not everyone has.

Afterward, on my way to my car, it's gotten a bit cooler with the darkness but not as much as you'd think, really. The canyon had already started to cool off when I arrived. I look up at the stars running riot across the sky, unobscured by city lights.

So this is one of the things that Arthur Conan Doyle has given me. Besides the amusement and the reassurance. He gives me moments like these. Hamburgers and hugs and good conversation. Comfortable faces. Moments away from life. This lonely man, Sherlock Holmes, who doesn't have friends. Just the one. He gives me nights like this.