



STORIES INSPIRED  
*by the* HOLMES CANON

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IN THE COMPANY OF  
SHERLOCK  
HOLMES

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PEGASUS CRIME

NEW YORK LONDON

IN THE COMPANY OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

Pegasus Books LLC

80 Broad Street, 5th Floor

New York, NY 10004

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First Pegasus Books cloth edition November 2014

Interior design by Maria Fernandez

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The Library of Congress has cataloged the printed edition as follows:

ISBN: 978-1-60598-658-6

ISBN: 978-1-60598-713-2 (e-book)

Distributed by W. W. Norton & Company

*To Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Steel true, blade straight*

# IN THE COMPANY OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

## *AN INTRODUCTION*



So who is this Holmes fellow, anyway? The world's most perfect observing and reasoning machine, yet his method seems to depend heavily on nicotine-fuelled flights of imagination. A bare-knuckle and martial-arts fighter, who also claims to be the laziest thing in shoe leather. A lethargic amateur actor with a drug problem, yet a man capable of extreme physical exertions. A solitary misanthrope—who has two friends (doctor and housekeeper) so devoted they would lay down their lives for him.

A solver of mysteries, who is a mystery himself.

Holmes as an archetype—the word means “original model”—is of one of the defining images of the past 150 years, a variation on Jung's “artist-scientist” figure. The world did not know what it lacked until Conan Doyle showed us—but then, stand back, for when an archetype comes to life, he is, in the terminology of the new millennium, a *meme*.

The meme is a contagious artifact—image, idea, phrase, behavior—that spreads like a virus. And like any other virus, be it biological or computer-based, it grows, reproduces, mutates—and above all, affects its host. And as a virus holds a world of genetic information in its DNA, a viral meme can carry a lot of meaning on its narrow shoulders.

Variations on the theme of Holmes have been played ever since the man first saw print. Some have been whimsical, others deadly serious; some have even taught us something about ourselves. For Sherlock Holmes is both us, and a super-hero, armed not with greater-than-human powers, but with wits, experience, a small community of dependable friends, and the occasional singlestick or riding crop. Like the artist-scientist, Holmes takes a mass of cold, unrelated, and inert fact, shapes it between his narrow, nicotine-stained hands, and then electrifies it—and us—with a bolt of inspiration.

Come to think of it, perhaps we should envision him, not as an archetype, but as a golem, a mud figure brought to life by human need.

In any event, Sherlock Holmes shows no sign of flagging in this new era. A century and a quarter after the world was greeted by his gleeful cry at a laboratory discovery, men and women still find Holmes the ideal vessel to carry a variety of stories, aspirations, reflections.

The current volume finds another group of those restless minds, men and women who look for companionship on the road, and gleefully find themselves . . . in the company of Sherlock Holmes.



This book took an amazing journey to end up in your hands. It began when Les was asked to assemble a panel on Sherlock Holmes (no surprise there) for Left Coast Crime, a conference held in 2010 in Los Angeles. He agreed, chose Laurie King for the panel,

and then asked for Jan Burke, Lee Child, and Michael Connelly. “But those are the guests of honor!” he was told. He knew that, but he also knew that they were all fans of the Sherlock Holmes canon. Our panel was a great hit. Jan, Lee, and Michael all chimed with erudite commentary on topics Sherlockian (usually after a preface of, “Well, I don’t really know much about Sherlock Holmes . . .”)

From this panel sprang the idea of a book. We put it together in 2011—*A Study in Sherlock*—and were delighted at how many friends wanted to play “The Game,” creating stories inspired by the canon. Others said they’d love to but had other deadlines, and so the idea of a second volume was conceived before the first was published.

During the preparation of that first volume, the Conan Doyle Estate—collateral relatives of Sir Arthur, who own the U.S. copyrights to the ten Sherlock Holmes stories published after 1922—asserted that we had to obtain their permission to use the characters of Holmes and Watson in new stories. We disagreed, but the publisher chose to simplify matters by paying for permission.

Meanwhile, the world of Sherlock Holmes got bigger. *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* broke all box-office records for a film about Sherlock Holmes. (Les, a technical advisor, takes full credit for its success.) *Sherlock*, starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman, set records in England and America for viewing audiences and brought a new generation of readers into the Sherlock Holmes fold. Almost simultaneously, *Elementary*, with Johnny Lee Miller and Lucy Liu, gave its leads the distinction of having appeared on-screen as Holmes and Watson more than any other actors in history.

In 2012, as we readied this volume for publication, the Conan Doyle Estate notified the publisher that if we did not obtain a license for the use of the characters of Holmes and Watson, the Estate would block distribution of the book. At that, the long-simmering dispute came to a head.

“Leslie Klinger v. The Conan Doyle Estate, Ltd” was filed in federal courts, and the Free Sherlock movement was born, seeking definitive judgment that the characters of Holmes and Watson were no longer protected by U.S. copyright law. The argument was: since fifty of the original Doyle stories *were* in the public domain (that is, free of copyright protection), the remaining ten—although retaining their copyright to original characters and situations—did not redefine the central characters of the stories, and thus, Holmes, Watson, and the others were free to be used in new ways.

The District Court agreed, as did the Seventh Circuit court of appeals. We made history, and Sherlock Holmes is “free.” (Hardly *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce*, although the case felt like that at times—we are eternally grateful for the patience of our long-delayed contributors! For details on the case, visit [www.free-sherlock.com](http://www.free-sherlock.com).) At long last, we were able to proceed with this collection of amazing stories by brilliant authors and artists, all of whom (well, other than the artists in our little Company) reveal here for the first time how they were “inspired by Sherlock Holmes.”

We hope you agree that it was worth the wait.

Laurie R. King & Leslie S. Klinger

# THE CROOKED MAN

*by Michael Connelly*



The address was at the top of Doheny beyond a guardhouse and swing gate that protected a community of mansions with price tags of ten million and up. It was where the city's royalty lived. Movie moguls and captains of industry, sitting on top of the mountain and looking down on all the rest. But sometimes all the gilding and guarding wasn't enough to protect one from the inside. Harry Bosch held his badge up to the man in the gray uniform at the guardhouse door and said nothing. He was expected.

"You know which one it is?" the guard asked.

"I'll find it," Bosch said.

The guardrail opened and Bosch drove on through.

"Going to be hard to miss," said his partner, Jerry Edgar.

Bosch proceeded past estates that sprawled across the southern ridge of the Santa Monica Mountains. Vast green lawns that had never accepted a weed because they didn't have to. He had never been in the Doheny Estates but the opulence was even more than he expected. Up here even the guesthouses had guesthouses. They passed one estate with a garage that had a row of eight doors for the owner's car collection.

They knew only the basics about the call out. A man—a studio man—was dead and a wife—a much younger wife—was on the premises.

Soon they came to a house where there were three patrol cars parked outside the driveway entrance. In front of them was a van from the coroner's office and in front of that was a car that looked like it belonged in the driveway rather than the street. It was a long, sleek Mercedes coupe the color of onyx. Bosch's battered black Ford looked like a mule next to a stallion.

Edgar noticed the incongruity as well and came up with an explanation.

"My guess, Harry? She's already lawyered up."

Bosch nodded.

"That will be just perfect."

Bosch parked in front of the Mercedes and they got out and headed back to the driveway, where a patrol officer stood next to the yellow tape strung between the stone lions on either side of the gray cobblestone drive. The officer wrote their names down on a crime scene attendance log.

Another officer stood outside the set of twelve-foot-high doors that gave entrance to the house. He opened one side for them.

"The sergeant's with the coroner's team in the library room to your right," the officer said. And then, as if unable to contain himself, he added, "Can you believe this place?"

He looked at Edgar as he asked the question. Both men were black and it was as though the officer thought only a fellow black man could appreciate the over the top wealth that was on display.

"Who actually has a library in their house?" Edgar answered.

He and Bosch moved into the house, stepping into an entry hall that rivaled the

square footage of Bosch's entire house. Bosch looked to his right and saw the patrol sergeant who was in charge of the scene and who would soon transfer that command to Bosch as the lead on the homicide team.

Bosch and Edgar moved through a living room so large that it had two separately designed sections of furniture, each with its own piano and fireplace. An ornate serving table separated the two sides. Displayed on it was a collection of bottles containing amber liquids of various gradations and undoubtedly too high end for Bosch to identify.

"What is this?" Edgar asked. "One side for daytime and the other for night? This place is over the top."

Bosch didn't respond. Sergeant Bob Fitzgerald was waiting by the closed double doors on the other side of the room. The so-called library, Bosch assumed.

"What do you have, Nox?" he asked.

Fitzgerald's nickname was a study in police brevity. Everything was always reduced to acronyms or the shortest terms possible in the department. That went for nicknames as well. Bob Fitzgerald had originally been branded with the sobriquet Bobnoxious after his decidedly forward personality, especially when it came to female rookies. Over time that got trimmed down to simply Nox.

"We've got a James Barclay on the floor in here," Fitzgerald said. "He's CEO of Archway Studios. I should say *was* CEO. He's not looking so good right now. He's dead. And we've got his wife, a Nancy Devoy, sitting in a study on the other side of the house with her lawyer."

"What's she say happened?"

"She's not saying shit, Harry. Her lawyer ain't letting her talk. So we don't know what the hell happened yet. That's why they pay you the big bucks, right?"

"Right," Bosch said. "When did the lawyer get here?"

"Was already here when my guys responded to the nine-one-one. The lawyer's the one who made the call. He called it an accident, by the way. It doesn't look much like an accident, you ask me."

Bosch ignored Fitzgerald's detective work. No one was asking.

"What's her lawyer's name?"

"Klinger—perfect lawyer name, you ask me. I didn't get the first."

Bosch could not remember a lawyer named Klinger that he had any previous interaction with. It was likely that he was a family lawyer. People up this high on the hill didn't usually have criminal defense experts on the payroll.

"Okay, Nox."

He turned to his partner.

"Jerry, you go over there and start with her," he said. "See if the lawyer's willing to let her talk to an investigator. I'll check out the scene first and meet you over there."

"Sounds like a plan," Edgar said.

He turned and headed back across the double living rooms. Bosch looked back at Fitzgerald.

"You going to let me go in or do we stand here all day?"

Fitzgerald shrugged, then knocked once on the door and then opened it.

"And they call *me* Nox," he said as Bosch passed by.

Bosch entered the library to find a coroner's team along with a forensic criminalist and a photographer working around the body of a man sprawled on the floor near a brick fireplace. The dead man was fully clothed in blue jeans, a golf shirt, shoes and socks. Bosch recognized the deputy coroner and was immediately pleased. Art Doyle



was one of the more thorough cutters in an office beleaguered by staff cutbacks and low morale. But more important than what he did in the autopsy suite was his work in the field. The guy was a crime scene artist, so good at interpreting the physical nuances of murder that for years he had been known by one name of distinction and respect. It was a sobriquet that could not be abbreviated or reduced in any way.

Equal to Doyle's interpretive skills was his willingness to share his findings and discuss possibilities with detectives on the scene. This was indeed rare. There were many deputy coroners, fearful of being wrong or of talking out of turn or of facing the wrath of a defense attorney in court, who wouldn't dare comment on a possible cause of death at the crime scene—even when looking at a body at the bottom of a swimming pool.

Doyle was manipulating the dead man's head, turning it right and left, using both of his gloved hands to hold it securely. He then moved his hands lower and palpated the neck. Bosch heard him comment to his investigator that rigor mortis had retreated. The investigator wrote a note on his clipboard.

Before moving in toward the body, Bosch decided to survey the surroundings. All four walls of the library were lined with bookcases floor to ceiling. The dark wood cases were ten feet high and a brass railing ran along the upper shelves with a ladder on wheels that could be slid into position to access books on the upper reaches. The cases were built around two windows on one wall and a set of French doors on an adjoining wall. One of the doors was open and there was glass from the window pane next to the door handle scattered across the dark oak floor. Outside the furthest trajectory of glass was a white stone the size of a potato. It was the instrument used to break through the glass.

Careful not to step on the broken shards, Bosch stepped out through the door without touching it and moved out into another vast yard that was perfectly manicured and featured a shimmering blue pool. He realized how quiet it was up here so far above the city. It was so silent it was eerie.

After a moment's reverie Bosch turned to go back inside and noticed the white stones used to create a border between the lawn and the strip of plantings that ran along the side of the house. He saw the gap where one of the stones had been taken to be used to break the glass on the door. Whoever had broken in hadn't had a plan. Grabbing the stone was improvisational.

Bosch stepped back through the open door and looked to see if Doyle had noticed him yet. He hadn't. But Bosch knew from experience with the deputy coroner that he should ask permission to approach the body. He pulled a pair of latex gloves out of the left pocket of his suit coat and put them on, snapping the rubber loudly in an effort to draw Doyle's attention.

It didn't work. Bosch cleared his throat and spoke up.

"Sherlock?"

Doyle finished his examination of the neck and looked up at Bosch.

"Ah, Harry. Come in to our little circle here. The game is afoot."

He smiled at his own conceit. Permission granted, Bosch walked over and squatted next to the body in a baseball catcher's stance. He placed one hand down on the floor to stop himself from losing balance and lurching forward. Only then did he see the deep gash on the left side of the dead man's forehead. And what he had thought from a distance was possibly a bad toupee was actually the victim's hair stained black with dried blood from the wound.

"You came in early today," Doyle said.

Bosch nodded.

"Always do," he said. "I like the squad room when it's empty. Before everybody starts coming in."

Doyle nodded.

"Must be hard to keep that routine these days," he said. "I mean, now that you leave a woman behind in your bed."

Bosch looked up from the dead man to Doyle. He controlled the urge to ask him how the hell he knew about Hannah. He looked back down at the body.

"Okay, so what have we got here, Doc?"

"We are looking at the obvious, Detective. The decedent exhibits only the laceration on the forehead. The wound is deep and examination reveals the weapon penetrated the frontal bone, exposing the brain. Untreated immediately, this would be a fatal event."

Bosch nodded as he reached into the right side pocket of his coat for his notebook.

"I saw you checking rigor. Anything on time of death yet?"

"We've done liver temperature and rigor confirms death last evening. I estimate between ten and midnight. We can try to narrow it down further after we take Mr. Barclay to the autopsy suite."

Bosch wrote it down.

"Can you give me an idea about the weapon?" he asked.

"I can point out to you that the tool set belonging to the fireplace behind me is missing the poker," Doyle said. "This specific tool is usually a combination of spear and barb so that burning wood can be poked, prodded, hooked and pulled."

Bosch looked over Doyle's shoulder at the iron stand next to the stone fireplace. It had individual forks for holding the tools—a spade, a broom, and a two-handled vice for gripping firewood. The fourth prong held no tool.

Bosch scanned the room and didn't see the poker anywhere evident.

"Anything you can tell me that I wouldn't have found on my own?" he asked.

Doyle frowned and adjusted his own position at the head of the body, revealing his infirmity. Doyle was close to seventy and scoliosis had bent his back over time. It was as curved as the Pacific Coast Highway and required him to walk with forearm crutches to maintain balance. Bosch always thought it must pain Doyle deeply to be betrayed by the very thing he had spent his life studying.

"I can tell you a lot, Detective," Doyle said. "Only you can determine if you would have made these discoveries on your own."

"I'm ready when you are."

"Very well. Something for you to note first."

Doyle leaned forward with two gloved hands and pressed down on the victim's chest and stomach area, then continued.

"When we evacuate the decedent's air passages we emit a distinctively chalky scent of almonds and oak."

Bosch was immediately confused. Doyle had just reported that the blow to the head was the likely cause of death.

"I don't follow," he said. "The scent of almonds? Are you saying he was poisoned, too?"

"No, not at all. I am saying if you retreat to the living room you will notice a collection of cognacs and brandies atop a Louis Fourteen giltwood center table."

"I saw the bottles, yeah. I wouldn't know a Louis Fourteen from a Louis C.K."

"Yes, I know this. Anyway, on the table, look for a bottle of tear drop design displayed either in or on an oaken shrine. I believe our victim ingested a quantity of Jenssen Arcana shortly before his death."

"And Jenssen Arcana is what?"

"It's a cognac, Detective. One of the finest in the world. One of the most concentrated, too. Aged ninety-eight years in French oak. Five thousand, five hundred dollars a bottle the last I checked."

Bosch stared at Doyle for a long moment and had to give in.

"So you are saying that you can tell what kind of brandy this guy was drinking by what you just burped out of his dead body?"

"Quite so, Detective."

"You've tasted this stuff at fifty-five hundred dollars a bottle?"

"Actually, no. I am told that a taste of Jenssen Arcana is a life changing experience but to this date I have not imbibed. On a public servant's salary I have only had the occasion to sample the aroma of the great cognacs—the Arcana included."

"So you've sniffed it."

"It is said that the olfactory experience related to cognac is indispensable to the pleasure derived. I should not forget the Arcana. I do have a predilection for fine cognac and I have categorized the scent of those I have been lucky enough to both imbibe and sniff, as you say."

Bosch looked down at the body for a moment.

"Well, I'm not sure what our knowing what he was drinking gets us, but okay, I'll take it, I guess."

"It means a lot, Detective. You savor Louis Fourteen. It's for very special occasion or —"

"Look at this place, Doc," Bosch interrupted, raising his arms as if to take in the opulence far beyond the walls of the library. "I don't think five grand a bottle would bankrupt this guy. Louis Fourteen could've been the house juice, for all we know."

"That could not be the case, Detective. Quantities of the fourteen are extremely limited. You must have wealth to afford a bottle, true, but one bottle may be all you ever get in a lifetime."

Bosch grudgingly saw his point.

"Okay, so what do you think it means?"

"I think it means that before his death, something happened in this house. Something bad."

Bosch nodded, even though Doyle's conclusion did not help him. Usually something bad happens before every murder. A guy getting drunk on five-hundred-buck-a-shot cognac was indicative of nothing.

"I assume you drew blood and you'll get me an alcohol content," he said.

"You'll have it the moment we have it," Doyle said. "We'll run it as soon as we get Mr. Barclay to Mission Road."

He was referring to the location near downtown where the coroner's office was located.

"Good," Bosch said. "So then let's move on. What else you got, Doc?"

"Next, I refer you to the decedent's extremities," Doyle said. "First the left hand."

Doyle lifted the left arm and hand and presented it to Bosch. He immediately noticed a slight discoloration on the points of all four knuckles.

"Bruising?" he asked.

“Correct,” Doyle said. “Ante-mortem. The impact was very close to time of death. The blood vessels are damaged and just beginning to leak blood into the tissue. But the process was almost immediately halted when the heart stopped.”

“So, signs of a struggle. We’re looking for a killer who might have bruises from the punch.”

“Not exactly, Detective.”

Doyle manipulated the hand into a fist and then took a ruler and laid it across the knuckles. Its surface met the bruise point of every knuckle.

“What are you saying?” Bosch asked.

“I am saying that the bruise pattern indicates he punched a flat surface,” Doyle replied. “It is rare that you find uniformity in bruising from a physical altercation. People are not flat surfaces.”

Bosch drummed his pen on his notebook. He wasn’t sure what the bruising report got him.

“Don’t be impatient, Harry. Let’s move to the lower extremities. The underside of the right foot in particular.”

Bosch crab-walked down to the lower extremities of the body and looked at the bottom of the dead man’s shoe. At first he saw nothing but upon leaning down further saw a tiny twinkle of reflection. He leaned down further and looked into the shoe’s treads. He saw it again.

“What is that?”

“It’s glass, Detective. I believe you will be able to match it to the array of glass on the floor by the door.”

Bosch looked over at the French doors and the spread of glass on the floor.

“He walked on the glass . . .,” he said.

“He did indeed.”

Bosch looked at the body for a moment and then stood up. Both of his knees cracked. He took a half step back to steady himself.

Doyle signaled his assistant and was helped up into a standing position. The assistant handed him his crutches and he slipped his arms through the forearm cuffs and leaned forward on the supports. He looked at Bosch, turning his head slightly as if trying to get a better angle on something.

“What?” Bosch said.

“I would not dismiss that as a symptom of aging,” Doyle said quietly.

Bosch looked back at him.

“Dismiss what?”

“BPPV—you have it, Detective.”

“Really. And what is BPPV?”

“Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo. You needed to balance yourself both when you squatted down and when you got back up. How long has this been going on?”

Bosch was annoyed with the intrusion.

“I don’t know. Look, I’m sixty years old and my balance isn’t what it—”

“I repeat. It is not a symptom of aging. More often than not it is caused by an infection in the inner ear. My guess, since you listed both times to your right, that the problem is in your right ear. Would you like me to take a look at it? I have an otoscope with me.”

“What, a thing you stick in dead people’s ears? Thanks, but I’ll pass.”

“Then you should see your own doctor and have it checked. Soon.”

"Okay, okay, I'll do that. Can we get back to the case now?"

"Of course."

Doyle pointed one of his aluminum poles toward the French doors and they moved across the room. They looked down at the glass as if the pieces were like tea leaves waiting to be read.

"So . . .," Bosch began. "You're thinking he's the guy who came through the door?"

"The bruises on the knuckles suggest impact with a flat surface," Doyle reminded.

"You're thinking he was on the outside and he tried to break the glass with his fist at first."

"Exactly. Then the rock."

Doyle pointed his right pole at the rock.

"So punching plate glass like that, not smart," Bosch said.

"If he broke through he would have torn his arm up to the elbow," Doyle said.

"He wasn't thinking clearly," Bosch said.

"He wasn't thinking at all," Doyle said.

"The cognac," Bosch said.

"He was possibly drunk," Doyle said.

"And angry—someone was in here he was angry at," Bosch said.

"Someone who had locked the doors to get away from him," Doyle said.

"He couldn't break the interior door down so he went outside," Bosch said. "He thought he could break the glass."

"Impact resistant glass," Doyle said. "He hurt his hand."

"So he picked up the rock," Bosch said.

"He broke the glass," Doyle said.

"He reached in and unlocked the door," Bosch said.

"And he came in," Doyle said.

They had spoken quickly, brainstorming and filling in the story as if joined in a single thought process.

Now Bosch moved away from the door and back toward the body. He looked down upon James Barclay. His eyes were open, frozen in surprise.

"Whoever was in here was ready for him," he said.

"Quite so," Doyle said.

"She probably had the lights out," Bosch said. "And she hit him with the poker as he moved into the room."

"She?" Doyle asked.

"Percentages," Bosch said. "Most homicides in the home are the result of domestic disputes."

"Elementary," Doyle said.

"Don't start with that shit," Bosch said.

He looked around the room. He saw nothing else suspicious.

"Now we just need to find the poker," he said. "She left him here all night. She could have driven it out to the Pacific in all of that time."

"Or it could have never left the house," Doyle said.

Bosch looked at him. He knew Doyle knew something, or had surmised something.

"What?" he said. "Give."

With a half smile on his face, Doyle slid the rubber tip of his left crutch across the floor toward the shelves until it reached a line scratched in the floor. It was a perfect quarter of a circle.

“What would make a mark like that?” Doyle asked.

Bosch moved over and looked down.

“I don’t know,” he said. “What?”

Doyle toyed with him for five seconds but knew not to push it further.

“A door, perhaps?” he said.

Then Bosch understood. He looked at the shelves. This section was lined with old leather-bound tomes that looked as old as Doyle. Bosch stepped closer and studied the framing of the shelves. He saw nothing of suspicion. From behind him Doyle spoke.

“Doors that are not pulled open are often pushed open.”

Bosch put his hand on the vertical support of the three-foot wide section he stood in front of. He pushed on the seemingly stationary edifice and the section moved in a half inch, engaging a spring-loaded release. He let go and the entire section came out a few inches and Bosch was then able to pull it open like a foot-thick door. As it swung outward, he heard it scrape slightly on the floor. The quarter circle.

A light switched on automatically revealing the secret room beyond. Bosch stepped in, discovering it to be nothing more than a closet. It was a windowless space of dimensions not much larger than an interrogation room or a single-cell accommodation at Men’s Central Jail downtown. The room was crowded with boxes. Some were open, revealing their contents to be books waiting to be shelved or disposed of through donation or other means. There were a couple wooden boxes with wine logos branded on them.

“Well?” Doyle said from behind.

Bosch moved in. There was a musty smell to the space.

“It looks like it’s just storage.”

Bosch saw a black smear on the white wall above a stack of five boxes. It looked like it might be dried blood. He lifted the top box so he could get closer to it and he heard something heavy drop down behind. He leaned in closer and quickly started moving the boxes, creating a new stack in the middle of the space. When he pulled the last box away from the wall he was looking at a fireplace poker lying against the wall trim.

“Got it,” he said.

Bosch backed out of the space and told the photographer to document the poker in its position. Once that was done Bosch went back into the small space to collect the iron tool. He picked it up by its middle, careful not to touch the handle or the pointer and barb, which appeared to be covered in dried blood and hair. He walked it out of the hidden room into the library where the criminalist put plastic evidence bags over both ends and secured them with snap ties.

“So, Detective,” Doyle said, “do you have what you need?”

Bosch thought a moment and then nodded.

“I think so,” he said.

“Is it murder?” Doyle asked.

Bosch took a moment before answering.

“I think it’s looking like she could make a case for self-defense,” he said. “But she’s got to lay it out for me. If her attorney is smart he’ll let her talk to me. We might be able to clean this whole thing up right here and now.”

“Then good luck to you,” Doyle said.

Bosch thanked him and headed toward the door.

“Remember, Detective Bosch,” Doyle called after him.

Bosch turned back.

"Remember what?"

"Go see your doctor about that ear."

Doyle smiled and Bosch returned it.

"Will do," he said.

When Bosch got to the library door he paused as he considered something. He decided his desire to know outweighed his desire not to give Doyle his due. He once again turned back to the deputy coroner.

"Okay, how did you know?" he asked.

Doyle feigned ignorance.

"Know what?" he asked.

"That I left a woman behind in my bed this morning."

"Oh, that was easy. When you squatted next to the body, Detective, the cuffs of your pants came up. That revealed one black sock and one blue."

Bosch resisted the urge to confirm the report by looking at his ankles.

"So?" he said.

"Elementary," Doyle said. "It confirmed your early start. You dressed before dawn. It also confirmed that you dressed without turning on the bed lamp. A man would only do that if he wished not to disturb a sleeping partner."

Bosch nodded but then thought of something and pointed at Doyle.

"You said I left a woman in bed. How do you know it wasn't a man?"

Proud of himself, Bosch smiled. He had him.

But Doyle was undaunted.

"Detective, aside from previous knowledge that you are a father and formerly married to a person of the female gender, my olfactory skills are not related to the scent of cognac exclusively. I detected on you from the earliest stage of your arrival the lingering scent of white musk. I knew you had been with a woman. The socks merely confirmed it."

A glib smile played on Doyle's face.

"Any other questions, Detective?" he asked. "We need to get Mr. Barclay packed up and off to Mission Road."

"No, I'm good," Bosch said. "No more questions."

"Then good luck with the widow."

"Thank you, Sherlock."

Bosch turned from Doyle and finally left the room.

# THE CURIOUS AFFAIR OF THE ITALIAN ART DEALER

*by Sara Paretsky*



My wife having been called to the bedside of the governess who had been almost a mother to her, I was spending some weeks in my old lodgings on Baker Street. My wife's departure to Exeter, where her governess now resided, coincided with my own desire to spend time with my old friend and flatmate, Mr. Sherlock Holmes. On the one recent occasion when we had persuaded him to dine with us, I had seen that Holmes had fallen into that state of nervous irritability he was subject to when no case or other intellectual pursuit occupied his mind.

As was typical of him on such occasions, he screeched away on his violin at all hours. I found the sound painful enough, but the occupants of the flat above threatened an action at law if he didn't desist between the hours of two and six a.m. "We know Mr. Holmes is a great genius who has often saved our monarch from acute embarrassment, but we must beg for a few hours repose," their solicitor explained. Whereupon my old friend took up his pernicious cocaine habit once again.

I pled both as a friend and a medical attendant, to no avail: Holmes hunched himself deep in his chair and muttered that he had not inflicted his company upon mine, that I had chosen to come uninvited, when I could have been in uxorious attendance on Mary in Exeter. At times like this, my friend often displayed a petulant jealousy of my wife, or perhaps of my preference for her company: upon our marriage he was wounded by our refusal to take lodgings across the landing from his own.

In an effort to rouse him from his stupor, I tried to draw Holmes's attention to crimes reported in the sensationalist press. The stabbing of a cabman in Fleet Street "was banal beyond bearing," while the theft of the Duchess of Hoovering's emerald tiara "would prove to be the work of a criminal housemaid." When later reports confirmed he was wrong in both cases—the Hoovering cadet, bitter at the privations of a youngest son, had sold the tiara to fund a disastrous trip to Monte Carlo, while the cabman turned out to have been a Russian spy trying to overhear secrets of a Hapsburg diplomat—Holmes sank deeper into his drugged stupor.

I could not neglect my own practice, or perhaps I should say, my other patients, who were usually more willing to follow my advice than was my brilliant but capricious friend. It was at the start of the third week of my stay with him that I was summoned to the Gloucester Hotel to attend a man who had been violently assaulted in the night.

The hotel manager, a Mr. Gryce, was more anxious that my arrival should be kept a secret than he was for the welfare of his battered guest. "An Italian prince and a French countess are among our current guests," he said as he led me up to the second floor by way of the servants' staircase. "Any scandal or fear that assaults are part of every day life at the Gloucester would be most detrimental to our business."

I turned around in the middle of the stairwell. "I hope your guests believe that your solicitude for their welfare would cause you to respect the medical man you brought in to examine them. If you can't take me up by the main stairs then I will return to my surgery, where a number of patients no doubt await me already."



Mr. Gryce hurriedly begged my pardon and took me along the red-carpeted hall to the main staircase, which was filled at this hour with ladies on their way down to the street to shop or meet friends for coffee. On the second floor, the wounded guest lay in a suite near the hotel's northeast corner, a secluded part of the building which afforded but a poor view, since the flats on Cassowary Road obscured all but the tallest trees in Hyde Park. A secondary stair led from this wing to the hotel mews.

My patient was a man perhaps in his mid-twenties. Despite his Italian name—Frances Fontana, visiting from Buffalo, New York—he was a fair man, probably attractive when not swathed in bandages.

The sufferer had been badly struck around the face and had significant cuts in his fingertips. I could make no sense of the wounds, nor of the man's story. Fontana claimed he had been sound asleep when he was awakened around three by the lighting of the gas lamp in the main entrance to his suite.

"I got out of bed and instantly called out, demanding who was there. No one answered, but my attacker, his face covered by a mask, rushed through the sitting room and struck me about the head, demanding all the while where 'it' was. I hit out as hard as I could, but the man was clothed and I was in my nightshirt; he trod on my foot, demanding 'it.'

"Finally, it transpired he wanted a small painting I had brought with me from America. Family legend ascribed it to Titian and I had wanted an opinion from Carrera's on Bond Street. My assailant ransacked my luggage, looking for it, and found it in a secret compartment in my trunk. We fought for it, but he was stronger than I, and as I say, clothed and shod. As soon as he had left, I raced to the ground floor, where they thought I was perfectly demented, but when they saw my wounds, the night man bathed and dressed them. I lodged a complaint, of course, for how did the man get into my room, if not through their carelessness in giving him a key?"

Mr. Gryce looked reproachfully at Fontana. "We did not, Mr. Fontana. You know we went into this very thoroughly with the night porter and the night manager both, and no one asked for a key to your suite last night. It's possible that you yourself failed to lock the door."

Fontana protested angrily, but I cut short his outburst by unwrapping the bandages and forcing him to sit while I examined his wounds. The one on his right cheekbone was the most severe: he seemed to have been struck with some heavy object, perhaps a truncheon. I bathed the wounds with peroxide, put on a salve that contained an opiate to relieve the worst of the pain, and looked at his fingers.

"How did you come to injure your fingers? I have found a glass fragment in one of them and they all seem to have been cut with glass. At first I thought perhaps you had grasped a razor in your attacker's hands."

"What difference does it make? Are you as insensible as this man Gryce? Am I to be catechized when instead I need medical attention? I suppose the glass over the picture broke in our struggle. It's highly likely, after all."

I forbore to argue, simply checking each digit with my magnifying glass to make sure I had removed any glass fragments. I anointed his fingers with the same salve used on his face and told him that within a day he would be able to dress and eat without pain, but that for the next twenty-four hours he would do well to avoid using his hands.

He seemed to accept this with a good enough grace, and said that his man, currently lodged in the servants' wing, would take care of his most urgent needs, and would sleep in a truckle bed the hotel was bringing up so that he need not fear a second intrusion.

“And no word of this should get to my sister, mind you,” he added, as I restored my implements to the bag.

“Your sister?” I inquired. “Miss Fontana is also a guest in the hotel?”

“No. She is lodging with friends in Kensington. But she is likely to call, and I would have her believe I’ve gone to the country for a few days. It will alarm her greatly if word of this attack should reach her.”

Mr. Gryce promised to do as he asked readily as did I, in case the sister should learn that a medical man had been called in to consult with her brother. “I foresee no complications,” I said as I put on my hat and coat, “but should you need me, you may send word through Mr. Sherlock Holmes, whose guest I currently am.” Holmes’s name acted powerfully upon Fontana, as I confess I hoped it might. He said nothing, however, and I didn’t press the matter further.

As Gryce and I left, I looked around the living room of the suite and saw the signs of struggle clearly enough: drawers removed from the bureau, cushions from the divan lying at cockeyed angles, and my patient’s trunk, with the secret drawer smashed into splinters. Gryce interpreted my gaze as criticism and hastily promised that a chamber maid would be sent up to put matters to rights.

I returned to Baker Street that evening greatly fatigued, for my rounds that day had included a most difficult lying-in, where I barely outwitted the Angel of Death. I had all but forgotten my American patient, and I was startled to see him fully dressed, outside our lodgings, in argument with a beggar woman.

“Ah, there you are, Doctor. This wretched woman has followed me, I swear to heaven that she has been on my trail all the way from Hyde Park Corner. Begone, you harridan, or I’ll send for a constable.”

“Ah, you be a sly one, b’ain’t you, Mister? Thinking to do a poor beggar woman out of her widow’s mite, but there be no need to call for a lawman. I ain’t a going to do you no harm, no sir.”

I stepped closer, to order her away from my patient, but the odor rising from her many shawls and skirts was as thick as her country accent. I took Fontana by the arm, instead, and hustled him into our entryway.

On the way up the stairs I asked how he came to be so imprudent as to rise from his couch. He said my mentioning Holmes’s name had made him think his best course was to place his situation in the eminent detective’s hands. “The police sent a Mr. Whicher, but I didn’t care for his manner, no, not one iota. He seemed to blame me for being the victim of a crime.”

The eminent detective, sprawled languidly in the armchair, still in his stained dressing gown, didn’t look any more prepossessing than the beggar woman outside our door. Nor was the smell any more propitiating, although in Holmes’s case it rose from the chemicals he’d been playing with all day. The dull eye he turned on me as we entered turned to anger when he realized I had brought a guest.

Fontana seemed to find nothing odd in the consulting detective’s dress or manner—perhaps he had been warned that the great genius was eccentric to a degree. He plunged without invitation into a pouring out of his woes. As he spoke, my friend’s eyes shut, but not, as I’d feared, in a stupor, for he pressed his fingertips together as was his habit when he was concentrating intently on a narrative.

When Fontana finished, Holmes murmured, without opening his eyes, “And who knew that you were taking the painting from America to England with you?”

“No one,” Fontana said.

"Not even your sister," Holmes said.

"Oh! Beatrice. Yes, of course she knew."

"Your father was a classical scholar," Holmes said.

"My father is a banker, sir, or at least was until a stroke deprived him of his faculties a year ago. It is my mother who has a great love of the Italian classics. But why is that relevant, and how did you know?"

"You are named for one of the great Renaissance poets, and your sister for the innamorata of another," Holmes said languidly, his eyes still shut. "But your accent surprises me: I hear it on the lips of graduates from Winchester college more than from Americans."

Fontana's lips tightened, but he said with a semblance of nonchalance that his mother, whose family hailed from Guilford, had caused him to be educated at Winchester.

"Yes, I thought as much," Holmes said. "I have composed a monograph on the accents of the different public colleges of England and I am seldom mistaken. But to return to the business at hand, had you in fact called at Carrera's?"

"I stopped at the gallery yesterday morning, but Signor Carrera was not in, and I had no wish to put such an important commission in the hands of an underling. I left my card and my direction and asked that he call on me, but, though I lay in bed all day today per Dr. Watson's instructions, he never arrived." Fontana's tone was angry. "The English are famous for their manners, but few of the people I have encountered seem to have any consideration whatsoever, whether the police or the hotel manager, or even a gallery owner who might be interested in a large commission."

Holmes pointed out that Signor Carrera was not himself English, but added, "Perhaps he was your nighttime assailant. If he had wrested the painting from you, then he would know there was no need to call on you to examine it."

Fontana's eyes brightened at the idea: his shoulders relaxed and the choler in his eyes faded.

"And your sister, Miss Beatrice Fontana, she agreed with your mission to get a proper valuation of the painting?"

Fontana shifted uneasily. "She saw no point in calling public attention to it, should it prove valuable, nor of disappointing our parents, should it prove not to be the work of the great Titian."

"And she is staying with friends in Kensington, you say? Did she cross the Atlantic with you?"

"Yes; it was her voyage that decided me on my own. My mother felt that Mrs. Som—that is, an old friend of hers—could introduce my sister into society, since my mother herself is tied up wholly in care for my father." Fontana then reiterated his plea that his sister not be told; her worries for their father were sufficient. She did not need to know that her brother had been assaulted and the family's valuable painting stolen.

Holmes sat up slightly and looked at me.

"My dear fellow, you are all in—I see you have attended a difficult lying-in today—but perhaps, since he is here, you might examine your patient's wounds and change the dressing."

I wondered how he had discerned my professional duties this afternoon, but knowing him as I do, assumed there was some aspect of my dress that was habitual with me on such cases. I unwrapped Fontana's bandages and was pleased to see that healing was already underway, judging by the deepening discoloration around the wounds, as

well as the incipient scabbing. Holmes actually pushed himself from his armchair and looked on gravely as I bathed and anointed the injuries. While I rewrapped them in fresh bandages, my friend withdrew, and I heard the sound of water running into the bath—a welcome signal indeed!

I escorted Fontana to the street, but it took some time to hail a hackney cab. At length, I saw my patient safely bundled inside. I rather thought that the beggar who had accosted Fontana earlier was watching from a doorway at the corner, but as the nearness of Paddington Station makes Baker Street a popular spot for women of her ilk, I could not be certain in the dark streets.

By the time I returned upstairs, Holmes had finished bathing. For the first time in days he was dressed, and in clean linen. Mrs. Hudson was just in the act of laying a plate of grilled kidneys in front of him, a sort of compromise meal of breakfast and supper, with potatoes and a dressed salad. For me she had grilled a steak.

My friend ate with all the relish of a man deprived of nourishment for some weeks.

“A very pretty problem, Watson, very pretty indeed.”

“What did you make of his story?” I asked.

“It was the painting that interested me,” Holmes said. “That, and the fact that his wounds were self-inflicted.”

“Self-inflicted?” I repeated. “That blow on his cheek very nearly shattered the bone.”

“He’s left-handed, as I noted when he opened his card case,” Holmes remarked. “You observed, of course, how much more severe the blow to his right cheek was than to the left, and yet the placement of the blows was symmetrical.”

He picked up a sock stuffed with rags and handed it to me, instructing me to strike myself in the face. I reluctantly did so. The sock struck in both cases just beneath the eye-socket. In my case, being right-handed, I felt the blow much more on the left than on the right side, and had to concede the point.

“And the glass in his fingertips? Did he do that to himself as well?”

“Ah, that’s a most interesting point. I believe we have two calls to make, one on the Carrera Gallery in Bond Street, and the other to the home of Mrs. Alicia Someringforth in Cadogan Gardens, Kensington.”

At my puzzled expression, Holmes held up his directory of London boroughs and street addresses. “There are seventeen households in Kensington with owners whose last names begin with ‘Som,’ but only one of sufficient size to admit of enough rooms to include a young lady making her society debut. And Mr. Neil Someringforth has a position in the Foreign Office, Undersecretary of State for Oriental Affairs. He is at present in Cairo, leaving his lady with enough time to visit any number of balls and ridottos.”

Now that Holmes had recovered his spirit, and had food inside him, he was ready to act on the instant, to go first to Bond Street and then to the Someringforth home in Cadogan Gardens.

I grumbled to Holmes that the gallery would be closed at this hour, that not everyone had the luxury of sleeping all day and imagining that the world was ready to conduct business at night.

“My dear chap, you’ve been badgering me for weeks to get up, to be active. Don’t urge me to my bed now. And besides, it’s Thursday, the night that new shows open in Bond Street’s galleries. Carrera will be there, with wine and nuts and a desire to be accommodating. But if the fatigues of the day are such that you wish to retire, I can