

A Scandal¹ in Bohemia²

For Sherlock Holmes there is only one woman and she is superior to all others. However, you should not think that he's in love with her. He dislikes emotions, especially that one. Holmes is a thinking machine. Falling in love would stop his carefully balanced mind from working properly. Still, he has great respect for this woman and her name is Irene Adler.

At the time this story took place I hadn't seen Holmes for some time. I'd got married the previous summer and moved out of our shared flat in Baker Street.³ I'd returned to my old job as a doctor and I'd been spending all my free time with my wife setting up our new home.

¹ **scandal** *noun, countable* behaviour or event that people find morally shocking

² **Bohemia** *place name* part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, now part of the Czech Republic

³ **Baker Street** *place name* large street in Central London where Holmes' flat was situated; now famous for that reason

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Holmes had remained at **Baker Street**. He hated socializing and spent his time alone in the flat surrounded¹ by his old books. From time to time I'd heard news about him and knew he'd been busy investigating crimes that were too difficult for the police to solve.

Then one night, it was the twentieth of March, 1888, I was coming home after visiting a patient. My journey took me along Baker Street. As I passed Holmes' door, I had a sudden wish to see him again and find out what he was doing.

I looked up and saw a light shining² brightly in his window. At that moment I saw his tall slim³ figure⁴ pass behind the curtains. He was walking quickly round the room with his head bent down and his hands behind his back. I knew Holmes very well and immediately understood what this meant: he was concentrating⁵ hard on some new problem. I rang the bell and was shown up to the flat where I'd once lived.

Holmes didn't say much but I think he was glad to see me. He offered me a cigar⁶ and stood in front of the fire looking at

¹ **surround** *verb, transitive* to be on all sides of somebody or something

² **shine** *verb, intransitive* produce light

³ **slim** *adjective* thin (positive meaning)

⁴ **figure** *noun, countable* shape of someone's body

⁵ **concentrate** *verb, intransitive* to think very hard and carefully about something, giving it all your attention

⁶ **cigar** *noun, countable* rolled tobacco leaves used for smoking; like a fat, brown cigarette but made without paper

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me carefully. ‘Marriage suits you, Watson,’ he said. ‘You’ve put on¹ three and a half kilograms since I last saw you.’



‘Only three!’ I replied.

‘Really? I would say a little more. And I see you’re working as a doctor again. You didn’t tell me you were planning to go back to work.’

‘So how do you know?’

‘I can see it. I can deduce² it. I can also see that you’ve recently got very wet and muddy³ and your maid⁴ is extremely careless.’

‘Really Holmes!’ I said. ‘How can you possibly know that? It’s true I went for a walk in the country on Thursday and came home very dirty, but I’ve changed my clothes since then! As for our **maid**, Mary Jane, you’re right. She’s very lazy and my wife has given her notice,⁵ but I can’t understand how you can know that.’

He laughed to himself and rubbed his long hands together.

‘Simple,’ he said. ‘On the inside of your left shoe there are

¹ **put on** [weight] *phrasal verb* become fatter

² **deduce** *verb, transitive* to know something after thinking carefully about the facts

³ **muddy** *adjective* dirty with wet earth

⁴ **maid** *noun, countable* woman or girl servant

⁵ **give somebody notice** *phrase* tell somebody they must leave their job after a short period of time.

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some marks. Obviously they were made by someone removing mud¹ with a knife, but they did it so carelessly they cut the leather². That explains my deduction³ that you'd been out in bad weather and that your servant is so careless she damages your shoes.

And then there's my first deduction – that you're working as a doctor again. You walked into my room smelling of the chemicals that are used in hospitals. I could also see the end of your stethoscope⁴ sticking out from under your hat. Surely, any reasonably intelligent person could guess he was looking at a medical man.'

I laughed. 'You make it sound so simple,' I said. 'So why can't I make deductions like these? My eyes are as good as yours.'

'That's true,' he answered. He lit a cigarette, and threw himself into a chair. 'But when you see something, Watson, you do not observe it. There's a difference. For example, how many times have you seen the steps which lead up to this room?'

¹ **mud** *noun, uncountable* wet earth

² **leather** *noun, uncountable* soft material used for making shoes, bags etc. made from animal skins

³ **deduction** *noun, countable* knowledge that you get from logical thought

⁴ **stethoscope** *noun, countable* something used by doctors to listen to the heart beating

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‘Oh, hundreds of times.’

‘Then how many are there?’

‘How many? I don’t know.’ ‘Exactly! You’ve seen them but you haven’t observed them. Now, I know there are seventeen steps because I’ve both seen and observed.’

He paused¹ and picked up a sheet of thick note paper that was lying on his desk. ‘Anyway, as you are interested in the science of **deduction**, you may like to look at this.’ He passed me the paper. ‘It arrived in the post today. Read it aloud.’²

The note was neither signed nor dated and there was no address. It read:

A gentleman will visit you at eight o’clock this evening. He wishes to discuss a very important matter with you. We have good reports of you received. Your recent services to one of the royal families of Europe show that you can be trusted with confidential³ business. Be in your room at eight and do not be worried if your visitor wears a mask.⁴

‘How mysterious,’⁵ I said. ‘What do you think it means?’

¹ **pause** *verb, intransitive* stop doing something for a short time

² [read] **aloud** *adverb* read something so other people can hear

³ **confidential** *adjective* secret

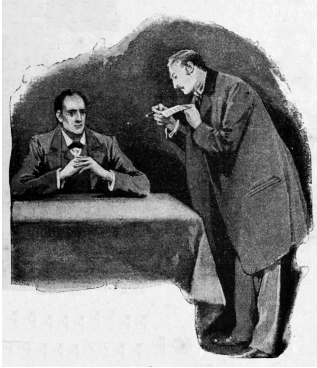
⁴ **mask** *noun, countable* something you wear over your face to hide or protect it

⁵ **mysterious** *adjective* something that is strange and difficult to explain

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‘At the moment I have no other information, and it’s a major mistake to make theories¹ before you have enough information. It’s too easy to make the facts fit your theory, instead of making your theory fit the facts. But what about the note? What can you **deduce** from it?’

I looked carefully at the handwriting and the paper it was written on. ‘Well, the man who wrote it was clearly wealthy,’² I said, trying to copy Holmes’ methods. ‘This paper is quite



unusual – very high-quality. You can’t buy that kind of paper cheaply.’

‘Unusual is exactly the right word,’ said Holmes. ‘It’s not English paper at all. Hold it up to the light.’

I did as he said, and saw a watermark.³ There was a large ‘E’ with a small ‘g’, a ‘P’, and a large ‘G’ with a small ‘t’.

‘What do you make of⁴ that?’ asked Holmes.

¹ **theory** *noun, countable* an idea that explains why something happened or happens. It may or may not be true

² **wealthy** *adjective* rich

³ **watermark** *noun, countable* hidden mark, logo etc. on paper that you can only see when you hold it up to the light

⁴ **make something of something** *phrasal verb* understand [situation etc.]

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‘The name of a hotel?’

‘Not at all. The “G” with the small “t” stands for “Gesellschaft”. It’s the German word for “Company”, like “Co” in English. “P”, of course, stands for “Papier”.¹ As for the “Eg”, let’s look in our European directory.’ He took down a heavy brown book from his shelves.² ‘Egnow, Eglonitz - here we are, Egria. It’s a German-speaking region of **Bohemia**, not far from Carlsbad.³ It’s well-known for its glass factories and paper-mills. Now what do you make of that?’ His eyes were shining, and he sent up a great cloud of blue smoke from his cigarette.

‘The paper was made in Bohemia,’ I said.

‘Precisely. And the man who wrote the note is a German. Look at this sentence: “We have good reports of you received.” Only a German would put the verb at the end of the sentence like that. We must wait and see what he wants - this German who uses Bohemian writing paper and likes to wear a **mask**. But listen! I can hear horses outside.’ He looked out of the window. ‘Two of them – beautiful animals - worth a lot - and a nice little carriage⁴ too. There’s money in this case Watson, if nothing else.’

¹ **papier** German word for paper

² **shelf** *noun, countable* flat piece of wood etc. fixed to the wall (or part of a piece of furniture), on which you put objects e.g. books or ornaments

³ **Carlsbad** *place name* former German name for a city in Bohemia (Czech Republic) now known as Karlovy Vary

⁴ **carriage** *noun, countable* vehicle pulled by horses

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At that moment the doorbell rang.

‘I think I’d better go, Holmes.’

‘Certainly not, Doctor. Stay where you are. This could be an interesting case. It would be a pity¹ to miss it.’

‘But your visitor...’ ‘Never mind him. I may want your help, and so may he. Here he comes. Sit down in that chair, Doctor, and pay careful attention to what he says.’

I heard slow, heavy footsteps² on the stairs and then a loud knock on the door.

‘Come in!’ said Holmes.

The man who entered was nearly two meters tall, with the chest and arms of a giant.³ His clothes were rich but the style was foreign. There was fur⁴ on his coat and he wore a dark blue cloak⁵ lined⁶ with deep red silk...

[end of preview]



¹ **it would be a pity** *phrase* it would be disappointing

² **footstep** *noun, countable* the sound somebody's feet make when they are walking

³ **giant** *noun, countable* a very tall, strong person

⁴ **fur** *noun, uncountable* animal skin with hair used for clothes

⁵ **cloak** *noun, countable* coat without sleeves fixed at the neck

⁶ **lined** *adjective* with a **lining** *noun, countable* - cloth that is inside a piece of clothing