

Penguin



Readers

THE ADVENTURES
OF
SHERLOCK
HOLMES



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The Adventure of the Yellow Band

My friend Sherlock Holmes has worked on about seventy **cases** in the last eight years. Some of these ended happily, some sadly, but they were all strange in some way. Holmes has only worked on cases that were interesting to him. But I cannot remember a case that was stranger than the one of the Roylott family of Stoke Moran in Surrey.

This was a few years ago, before I got married, and Holmes and I were sharing a flat in Baker Street. I did not write about it **immediately** because I promised to keep it secret. But a lot of people are talking about the death of Dr Grimesby Roylott, and I think that I need to tell the true story.

It was early April 1883, and I woke up one morning to see Holmes standing by my bed. He did not usually get up early, and I was surprised to see that it was only quarter past seven.

“I’m sorry to wake you up, Watson,” he said. “Mrs Hudson was woken early, and she woke me up.”

Mrs Hudson looked after our flat and cooked for us.

“What is it? Is it a fire?” I asked.

“No. I have a visitor, a young woman. She says that she must see me. She’s waiting in the sitting room. If a young woman comes to visit very early in the morning, she has something important to tell me. If the case is interesting,

maybe you'll want to listen to her."

"Thank you, Holmes. I don't want to miss a new case."

I quickly put some clothes on and followed my friend into the sitting room. A woman in a black dress was sitting at the window. She stood up when we came in.

"Good morning, **madam**," said my friend. "My name is Sherlock Holmes, and this is my friend Dr Watson. I see that Mrs Hudson has **lit** the fire. You're shivering. Please sit nearer to the fire, and I will ask Mrs Hudson to bring us some hot coffee."

"I'm shivering, but it's not because of the cold," answered the woman, moving to a chair near the fire.

"Why then?" asked Holmes.

"I'm shivering because I'm afraid." Her eyes were bright, like the eyes of a frightened animal. She was a woman of thirty, but she looked older and tired.

Holmes sat down next to her. "Don't be afraid," he said. "We can help you, I'm sure. You came to London by train this morning, I see."

"Do you know who I am?"

"No, but you have the second half of your ticket in your left glove. You started early, and you had a long drive on a bad road to get to the train station."

The woman looked at Holmes, her mouth wide open.

"It's not a difficult problem, madam," said Holmes with a smile. "Your left arm is dirty from the wet road. The driver was sitting on your right, so that arm is clean."

"You're right, Mr Holmes. I left home before six.

I reached Leatherhead at twenty past six and caught the first train to London. I'm very worried, and nobody can help me. One day, you helped one of my friends, and she gave me your name and address. I hope that you can help me, too. I have no money now, but I'm getting married in a month, and then I'll have some money. I can pay you then."



"Madam," said Holmes, "I don't work for money but I'll be happy to help. Please can you tell us about your problem."

"It's not easy," she answered, "because I'm not sure why I'm so worried. It's a lot of little things. Each little thing seems unimportant. I have talked to the man who I'm going to marry about them, and he doesn't think that there's any

danger. But, when I look at these small things together, they seem dangerous. Can I share these things with you?"

"I'm listening carefully, madam." Holmes sat back in his chair with his eyes closed.

"My name is Helen Stoner, and I live with my **stepfather**, Dr Roylott. We live in Stoke Moran in Surrey. The Roylott family was once rich, but it lost most of its money in the last hundred years. Now there's just a little land and a two-hundred-year-old house. The only son of the family, my stepfather, found enough money to study to be a doctor, and he went to work in India. Things went well for him there, but then something terrible happened. Somebody was stealing things from his house. He thought that it was one of his **servants**, and he got very angry and killed the man. My stepfather was in prison for a long time and came back to England an unhappy man.

"Dr Roylott married my mother in India. She was the **widow** of a soldier, Major-General Stoner. My sister Julia and I were **twins**, and we were two years old when our mother married Dr Roylott. My mother died in a train accident eight years ago. In her **will**, she left a lot of money. The money was for my sister and me when we married, but before that Dr Roylott had to look after it. After my mother died, Dr Roylott, Julia and I came to live at Stoke Moran. We had enough money to live, and Dr Roylott didn't need to work.

"But my stepfather didn't make friends near Stoke Moran. He often had **arguments** with neighbours and sometimes

had fights with people. He's a very strong man and most people in the village are afraid of him. His only friends are some people who sometimes camp on his land. They are travellers, and they move from village to village. My stepfather also likes animals, and he has a cheetah and a baboon which live wild in the garden. People in the village are frightened of the animals, too.

"My sister and I were unhappy in the house. Servants didn't want to work for my stepfather, so we did all the cleaning and cooking. My sister was only thirty when she died, but, like me, she already had white hair."

"Your sister is dead, then?" asked Holmes.

"Yes. I've come to speak to you about her death. She died two years ago. Because we lived with my stepfather, we didn't meet many people. But we did sometimes visit my mother's sister in Harrow. Julia went there for Christmas, and she became **engaged** to a soldier who was also visiting. When she came back to Stoke Moran, my stepfather seemed happy with the **engagement**. But two weeks before the **wedding**, something terrible happened, and I lost my only friend."

Holmes opened his eyes and looked at our visitor. "Please tell me what happened," he said.

"I will never forget the night. The house is big and very old, and we only live in part of it. Most of it is falling down. The sitting room is in the middle of the house and the three bedrooms are in a row to one side on the **ground floor**. The first of the bedrooms is Dr Roylott's, the second is my

sister's and the third is mine. There are no doors between the bedrooms, but they all open on to the same **corridor**. Have I explained well?"

"Yes," answered Holmes.

"The windows of the three rooms all open on to the garden. That night, Dr Roylott went to his room early, but we knew that he wasn't asleep because Julia could smell the smoke from his strong Indian cigarettes. She didn't like the smell, so she came into my room, and we talked for some time about her wedding plans. When she left, it was eleven o'clock. She stopped at the door and looked back at me.

"Tell me, Helen," she said. 'Have you ever heard someone **whistle** in the night?'

"No. Why?" I said.

"The last few nights I have heard a low **whistle** at about three in the morning. I don't know where it comes from – maybe the next room, maybe the garden. Maybe it comes from the travellers' camp. But if it comes from outside, it's strange that you don't hear it.' She turned and closed my door. I heard her go into her room and **lock** the door."

"Do you always lock your doors?" asked Holmes.

"Always. I told you that my stepfather had a cheetah and a baboon."

"Of course. Please continue."

"I couldn't sleep. My sister and I were twins, and when she was worried, I was, too. There was a storm, and the rain was hitting the windows hard. Suddenly, I heard a scream, and I knew that it was my sister's voice. I jumped