

*SHERLOCK
HOLMES:
THE
CROOKED¹
MAN*

¹ crooked = krumm, gebeugt

BY

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Chapter One: The Lost Key

One summer night, at the end of a long and hard day, I was sitting by the warm fire smoking my pipe and reading a relaxing book, when suddenly I heard someone ring the doorbell.

I looked at the clock; it was almost midnight. I was tired and ready to go to bed, but I knew it must be something important, so I slowly got up to open the door. Who could it be so late? I looked out and saw – Sherlock Holmes!

"Doctor Watson," he said quickly, "I hope it isn't too late for you."

"No, no my friend. Please come in and have a drink," I answered.

Holmes sat in the armchair looking at his whisky. I could see he was thinking.

"I know you had a lot of work to do today, Watson, but..."

"And how do you know what I did today, Holmes? We haven't met for six weeks." I asked, surprised.

"Well, my dear Doctor, I know that when you have to see a lot of patients you travel by coach² and not on foot. I can see that your shoes are not at all dirty, so I know you went by coach today – and so it is clear that you worked hard. Elementary, my dear Watson!"³

"Ah, yes! That's very good, Holmes," I said, "but now maybe you can tell me what you are doing here in the middle of the night!"

² coach = Kutsche

³ Elementary, my dear Watson! = Ganz einfach, mein lieber Watson!

Holmes looked at me. He didn't move. His eyes were glowing like fire. Oh yes, I knew what it was – my old friend had a new case!⁴

Holmes began: "Watson, tomorrow you will come with me and help me explain the death of Colonel⁵ John Barclay!"

Here is what I already know: Thirty years ago, when he was with the army in India, Colonel Barclay married a very beautiful and charming woman named Nancy. Now the Colonel and his wife Mrs. Barclay live – or lived – alone with their servants⁶ – they had no children – in a villa called Lachine near the town of Aldershot. The people there tell me that the Colonel was sometimes sad and angry (nobody knows why), but everyone says that there were no problems

⁴ case = Fall

⁵ Colonel = Oberst (in der Armee)

⁶ servants = Bedienstete

between him and Mrs. Barclay. He was a loving husband and she seemed to be a happy wife.

Now Watson, last week, when the Barclays were sitting in the dining room, something terrible happened. The servants heard them having a very loud argument. Mrs. Barclay shouted: 'I hate you! Give me back my life! What can I do now? Oh, I hate you so!' And then there were screams.

Of course, the servants wanted to get into the room, but the door was locked. So one man ran into the garden and climbed into the room through the window. Inside, he saw Mrs. Barclay lying in an armchair; she said nothing, but was crying softly. Colonel Barclay was dead on the floor. There were scratches⁷ on his face and blood on the back of his head.

Now this is the strange thing, Watson: The servant couldn't find the key to the dining

⁷ scratch = Kratzer

room door. So, I wonder who locked that door and how? And where is the key now? On Tuesday I went to Aldershot and interviewed the servants. They all think – and so do the police – that Mrs. Barclay is the murderer. But there is a problem, my dear Doctor: Mrs. Barclay is too ill to tell us anything.

So you can see this is not an easy case, Watson! There are some strange facts: One servant heard Mrs. Barclay shout the name 'Henry'. Why? And then there is the locked door and the lost key, which is not in the house, not in the garden, not anywhere. Now what does that key tell us, Watson?"

"I really don't know, Holmes," I said. "It's not easy to think in the middle of the night. "

"But it's elementary, my dear Doctor..."

Chapter Two: Footprints

We were now at Lachine, a big old stone house with great windows that opened onto a beautiful garden. There were tall trees and pink roses and green grass. It was hot; the sun was burning in the blue sky.

Very quickly, Holmes found some new information. Looking around, he saw footprints not seen by the police inspector. They were the footprints of a man: in the garden, on the road to the house, and on the house wall under the dining room window.

"Well, Watson!" said Holmes. "Remember the key I told you about? Now we have these footprints I really am sure there was another man in the room. And not just a man – look at these smaller prints. "

"But what's that?" I asked. "Is it a dog, Holmes, or maybe a monkey?"

"No, no Watson. If you look closely at the prints in the grass, you can see it must be a long, thin animal, like a weasel – but a very big weasel! I wonder what it has to do with the murder. "

"Well, all I know, Holmes, is that I understand even less than before, " I said.

"Ha! Maybe I can make things clearer for you, Watson. But first we must speak to Miss Morrison, a young friend of Mrs. Barclay's. The servants say she saw Mrs. Barclay in the morning on the day the Colonel died. I'm sure she knows more about what happened. "

Chapter Three: A Strange Meeting

Later that day we visited Miss Morrison, a pretty young lady with intelligent blue eyes and blond hair. But she wanted to tell us nothing – nothing at all.

"I'm sorry Mr. Holmes. I promised my friend I would say nothing about all this," said Miss Morrison.

"I understand," said Holmes, "but if you say nothing, my dear Miss Morrison, then your friend will certainly go to prison for murdering Colonel Barclay. I know that you love your friend and want to help her. That is why you must answer our questions. So, please, tell us what you know. What happened on the day Colonel Barclay died?"

"All right. If it stops Nancy going to prison, I will help you," she said slowly. "I was walking back home from town with Nancy on the day the Colonel died, when we saw a strange-looking man in the street. His hair was black, black as the night, he was all crooked and his voice was scary. I heard him shout: 'Nancy, my love, it's you!' My friend's face turned white as a ghost and she stood still like a statue. Then she looked at the man and said: 'I thought you were dead! How can it be you after so many years?' Then she asked me to walk away a bit, and she spoke to him for a few minutes. When she came back to me, her eyes were burning with fear⁸ and anger.⁹ She told me to say nothing about it to anyone. "

Holmes stood there thinking for a minute, his eyes closed. Then he said: "I thank you,

⁸ fear = Angst

⁹ anger = Wut

Miss Morrison. You have been very helpful. "

It was all clear now for Holmes. He had to find this crooked man.

Chapter Four: What Happened in India?

We were lucky. It was not difficult to find the man. There was a conjurer¹⁰ working in Aldershot called Henry Wood. Everybody knew him: His back was crooked and he walked around the town with a dangerous animal in a box. An old woman in a shop told Holmes that he always wore a turban – like an Indian; and he had Rupees – Indian money – in his pocket.

"Watson!" Holmes shouted, "This is it! Tomorrow, I am going to speak to this Henry Wood."

I saw the look in Holmes' eyes: The shining look when he knew he had solved¹¹ a case.

¹⁰ conjurer = Magier

¹¹ solve = lösen

The next day, Holmes came out of Henry Wood's house. There was almost a smile on his thin lips. Behind him, a tall policeman held Wood by the arm.

"Well, Watson, do you understand now?"

"Not really, Holmes," I answered, "Would you like to explain?"

"Ha! It's quite simple, my friend. Before I spoke to Mr. Wood, it was already clear what had happened. Now Mr. Wood has told me why.

Let me explain, Watson: We know that Wood knew Mrs. Barclay and he must have been in love with her a long time ago – remember he called her 'my love'.

We also know that Wood (just like the Barclays!) lived for a long time in India, because he had Rupees in his pockets and always wore a turban.

Now when he came back to England and began to work in Aldershot, he found out that the Barclays lived there, too. He saw his chance and took it.

He spoke to Mrs. Barclay in the street and told her he still loved her, but she told him to go away and never come back – that's why she was so afraid and angry the day she went into town with Miss Morrison.

So that night, mad with love and full of hate, he went to Lachine with his Indian mongoose¹² – remember the strange weasel prints!

He walked quickly across the grass, jumped through the open window and surprised Colonel and Mrs. Barclay in their dining room – that's when the servant heard Mrs. Barclay shout 'Henry'.

Wood wanted to kill Colonel Barclay so he could have Nancy, and so he made the mongoose attack the Colonel – remember

¹² mongoose = Mungo

the scratches on his face? The Colonel fell, hit the back of his head on a stone table and was dead. Now Wood almost had what he wanted.

But he needed to do one more thing: He locked the door so no one could get in and he could talk to Mrs. Barclay about his love for her; but when she screamed 'Oh, I hate you so!' he panicked, jumped out of the window with the key and ran home.

But you see, Watson, one thing was still not clear to me. There must have been something that made Wood hate Colonel Barclay so much that he wanted to kill him – something more than love for Mrs. Barclay. And Wood told me what it was.

In India, he was in the army with Barclay; they were good friends, but there was a problem. They both loved the same woman: Nancy. Nancy loved only Wood, but when she heard he had died fighting the Indians, she agreed to marry Barclay.

Now here's the unbelievable thing, Watson: Wood wasn't dead at all! Barclay had sent him away to fight in a wild and dangerous part of India in the hope that he would never return. He was taken prisoner by the Indians, who treated¹³ him so badly that his back became crooked and he went mad. He was gone for so long that everyone believed he was dead. Barclay's plan had worked. He had Nancy and Wood wasn't going to come back.

But all that time, Wood forgot nothing. He loved Nancy and hated Colonel Barclay. So you see, Watson, Wood is a murderer, but the Colonel was no angel!"

The sun was still shining in the sky. I smiled at Holmes. "You really are brilliant, my friend," I said.

"Oh, it's elementary, my dear Watson!"

¹³ treat = hier: behandeln

THE END