

## **(B)A STUDY IN SCARLET, BY A.C. DOYLE**

### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES**

In the year 1878 I took my degree of Doctor of Medicine of the University of London, and finished the course for surgeons<sup>1</sup> in the Army at Netley. At that time I was in the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers as assistant surgeon. I was on my way to India when the second Afghan war had started. So I followed with many other officers to Candahar.

That was a disaster. I was removed from my brigade and joined the other when the fatal battle of Maiwand happened. There I was struck on the shoulder. Murray threw me across a battlefield to the British lines.

Weak from the wound, I was removed to the base hospital at Peshawar. Here I was able to walk a little but I got ill. For months my life was in danger, and when at last I came to myself, I was so weak that they decided to send me back to England. I landed a month later at Portsmouth, with my health ruined.

I had nobody in England, and so was as free as air — or as free as a man with eleven shillings and sixpence a day can be. I went to London. There I stayed for some time at a private hotel in the Strand, leading a comfortless, meaningless life, and spending as much money as I had. My finances were so bad, that I soon realized that I must either live somewhere else in the country or that I must change my style of living. I chose the second alternative, so I needed to leave the hotel, and find less expensive place.

On the very day that I had come to this conclusion, I was standing at the Criterion Bar. Someone tapped me on the shoulder<sup>2</sup>; I turned round and recognized young Stamford. He was my assistant at Bart's hospital. A friendly face is a good thing to a lonely man. In old days Stamford and I weren't good friends, but now I met him with enthusiasm, and he seemed happy to see me. That's why I asked him to lunch with me at the Holborn, and we went together.

“What have you been doing with yourself, Watson?” he asked with a surprise, as we were going along the crowded London streets. “You are so thin and brown.”

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<sup>1</sup> A surgeon – хирург

<sup>2</sup> To tap smb. on the shoulder — похлопать кого-л. по плечу

I had told him about my adventures by the time we reached the place.

“Poor devil!” he said. “What are you doing now?”

“Looking for a flat,” I answered. “Trying to solve the problem if it is possible to get comfortable rooms at a good price.”

“That’s a strange thing,” my companion replied; “you are the second man today that has used that expression.”

“And who was the first?” I asked.

“A man who is working at the chemical laboratory up at the hospital. He was upset this morning because he could not find someone to share some nice rooms with him. They were too expensive for one.”

“Oh, man!<sup>3</sup>” I cried; “if he really wants someone to share the rooms, I am the very man for him. It’s better to have partner than to be alone.”

Young Stamford looked at me strangely. “You don’t know Sherlock Holmes yet,” he said; “perhaps you would not like him as a constant companion.”

“Why, what is there against him?”

“Oh, I didn’t say there was anything against him. He is a little strange in his ideas — an enthusiast science. As far as I know he is a good man.”

“A medical student, I suppose?” I said.

“No — I have no idea. I’m sure he good at anatomy, and he is a first-class chemist; but, as far as I know, he has never taken out any systematic medical classes.”

“Did you never ask him what he was doing?” I asked.

“No; he is not a man that it is easy to talk to, though he can be communicative enough when he’s interested.”

“I would like to meet him,” I said. “If I live with someone, he should be a man of quiet habits. I am not strong enough to have much noise or excitement. I had enough in Afghanistan. How could I meet this friend of yours?”

“He must be at the laboratory,” my companion answered. “He can work there from morning till night. If you like, we will go there together after lunch.”

“Certainly,” I answered, and we changed the topic of the conversation.

As we were on our way to the hospital after leaving the Holborn, Stamford gave me a few more details about Sherlock Holmes.

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<sup>3</sup> Oh, man – ничего себе

“You mustn’t blame me if you don’t get on with him,” he said; “I sometimes meet him in the laboratory.”

“It seems to me, Stamford,” I added, looking at my companion, “that you have some reason for washing your hands of the matter.<sup>4</sup>”

“It is not easy to express,” he answered with a laugh. “Holmes is a little too scientific for my tastes. He can even beats the corpses<sup>5</sup> in the laboratory with a stick.”

“Beating the corpses!”

“Yes, to know if bruises<sup>6</sup> can appear after death. I saw him at it with my own eyes.”

“And yet you say he is not a medical student?”

“No. Nobody knows why he does this. But here we are, and you must form your own impressions about him.” As he spoke, we turned into a narrow street and passed through a small side-door, which opened into a wing of the great hospital. We made our way to the chemical laboratory.

This was a room with countless bottles. It was broad with separate low tables. There were little lamps and tubes. There was only one student in the room, who was absorbed in his work. At the sound of our steps he looked round and jumped to his feet with a cry of pleasure. “I’ve found it! I’ve found it,” he shouted to my companion, running to us with a test-tube in his hand. “I have found a re-agent which is precipitated by hemoglobin, and by nothing else.”

“Dr. Watson, Mr. Sherlock Holmes,” Stamford said, introducing us.

“How are you?” he said, shaking my hand. “You have been in Afghanistan as I can see.”

“How did you know that?” I asked.

“Never mind,” he said. “The question now is about hemoglobin. Do you understand the importance of my discovery?”

“It is interesting, chemically,” I answered, “but practically...

“Why, man, it is the most practical medico-legal discovery for years. Don’t you see that? Come over here now!” He drew me over to the table at which he had been working. “Let us have some fresh blood,” he said, taking a drop of blood with a chemical

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<sup>4</sup> To wash one’s hands of – снимать с себя ответственность, умывать руки

<sup>5</sup> A corpse – мертвое тело. труп

<sup>6</sup> A bruise - синяк

pipette. “Now, I add this small quantity of blood to a litre of water. It seems that the resulting mixture looks like water. The proportion of blood cannot be more than one in a million.” As he spoke, he threw into the mixture a few white crystals, and then added some drops of a transparent<sup>7</sup> fluid. In a moment the mixture became dark brown colour.

“Ha! ha!” he cried, clapping his hands, and looking as happy as a child with a new toy. “What do you think of that?”

“It seems to be a very delicate test,” I remarked.

“Beautiful! Beautiful! The old test was very uncertain. If this test had been invented earlier, there wouldn’t be hundreds of criminals now walking the earth.”

“That’s true” I said.

“There was no reliable test. Now we have the Sherlock Holmes’s test.”

He put his hand over his heart and bowed as if there was applauding crowd in front of him.

“My congratulations,” I remarked, surprised at his enthusiasm.

“There was the case of Von Bischoff at Frankfort last year. Then there was Mason of Bradford, and Muller, and Lefevre of Montpellier, and Samson of New Orleans. I could name lots of cases in which this test could help.”

“You are like a walking calendar of crime,” said Stamford with a laugh. “You can start a book on those lines. Call it the ‘Police News of the Past.’”

“It can be very interesting reading,” remarked Sherlock Holmes, sticking a small piece of plaster over his finger.

“We came here on business,” said Stamford, sitting down. “My friend here wants to find a flat. And you told me you couldn’t find a person to share a flat with you. I thought that it’s good to bring you together.”

Sherlock Holmes was happy at the idea of sharing his rooms with me. “I have my eye<sup>8</sup> on a flat in Baker Street,” he said, “which would be ideal for us. You don’t mind the smell of strong tobacco, I hope?”

“I always smoke,” I answered.

“That’s good enough. I generally have some chemicals, and sometimes do experiments. Would that annoy you?”

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<sup>7</sup> Transparent - прозрачный

<sup>8</sup> To have an eye on – следить, положить на что-то глаз

“Not at all.”

“Let me see — what are my other drawbacks<sup>9</sup>? At times I don’t open my mouth for days. Just let me alone, and I’ll soon be right. What can you tell about yourself now? It’s just better to know the worst about one another before living together.”

I laughed at this cross-examination. “I have a bulldog,” I said, “and I can’t stand noise because my nerves are shaken, and I get up late, and I am extremely lazy. I have some other bad habits when I’m well, but those are present.”

“Do you include violin playing in your category of noise?” he asked.

“It depends on the player,” I answered. “A well-played violin is great — a badly played one —”

“Oh, that’s all right,” he cried, with a laugh. “I think we can try — that is if you like the rooms.”

“When can we see them?”

“Call for me here at noon tomorrow, and we’ll go together,” he answered.

“All right — noon<sup>10</sup> exactly,” I said, shaking his hand.

We left him working, and we walked together towards my hotel.

“By the way,” I asked suddenly, stopping and turning upon Stamford, “how did he know that I had come from Afghanistan?”

My companion smiled a mysterious smile. “That’s just his little peculiarity<sup>11</sup>,” he said. “A lot of people want to know how he finds things out.”

“Oh! It’s a mystery is it?” I cried, rubbing my hands. “This is very interesting. Thank you for bringing us together. ‘To study mankind is to study a man,’ you know.”

“You must study him, then,” Stamford said. “You’ll find him a knotty problem<sup>12</sup>, though. I’m sure he’ll learn more about you than you about him. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye,” I answered, and went to my hotel, interested in my new acquaintance.

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<sup>9</sup> A drawback - недостаток

<sup>10</sup> Noon - полдень

<sup>11</sup> Peculiarity – особенность, отличительная черта, странность

<sup>12</sup> A knotty problem – сложная проблема, спорный вопрос