

Watson's Dilemma

Chapter One

Mysterious Behavior

Assuming my instructions have been carried out I've been fifty years in the ground and this narrative sealed for that time. For numerous reasons, some of which will soon become apparent, I feel this necessary to protect the privacy of those mentioned in this account. I trust the conservators of my estate have honored my wishes and kept even the existence of this manuscript under seal. Fifty years should see all the principals gone, since we are all now at or approaching the Biblical promise of three score and ten.

If there are still, in that distant future, those who take interest in my adventures you may be disappointed to find it is not the good Doctor who is writing this chronicle. It is, however, his wish that I be the one to document this final account. I will tell you now that just as he found it necessary to alter details of his accounts, in the name of discretion, I too thought it prudent. My pen will at least give opportunity to acknowledge my companion's contributions to my career. A circumstance no doubt he would have omitted had he written this memoir.

Before setting to with this narrative I puzzled over the proper presentation of the facts. I have concluded it best to proceed, with the help of my journal and casebook, as I viewed it at the time. No matter in what condition or situation I found myself, my journal was attended daily. I allowed no vacillation in this task. I have reconstructed conversations, and reports no longer available to me, as best I could from my notes. These recordings were never intended to be an historical account. Watson, who often embellished his stories for literary merit, has read my reconstructions and agrees that I have captured the moments, if not the exact words. And so I begin.

Watson had been acting strangely and at times rather secretive, enough so that I engaged the Baker Street Irregulars to provide me details of his activities. I was struck that my friend was in trouble and

although I had expressed my concern, it was obvious he was not yet ready to take me into his confidence. Perhaps he was hesitant to involve me because of the melancholy I was experiencing, an affliction which settles upon me from time to time. I was confident, however, that whatever was troubling Watson would eventually come to the fore.

Over my objections Watson had just about given up the practice of medicine, limiting himself to only a few select patients. His literary success allowed him this luxury. "Too restrictive with my time," he said. "I need the flexibility writing accords me. Besides," he said with a laugh, "whatever would you do without me?" My argument was not that I did not appreciate his assistance; to the contrary, the successful completion of most of my cases was due to his consul, a truth he saw fit to omit in his accounts. I was concerned that in the future he would regret the decision to abandon his noble profession and think me accountable.

Watson had recently quit our shared lodgings in favour of his new wife, a circumstance I could hardly hold against him, Mrs. Watson being a remarkably pleasant companion. A lay-about in the morning, she allowed his usual habit of breakfast with me and then, late morning, he saw to his now limited practice. Any necessary house or surgery visits were taken care of in the early afternoon and then it was back for tea. During these visits Watson was greatly interested in any case I was presently involved in. He would question me at length and offer opinions and observations. His questions and remarks often gave me a different and more productive path to follow. I seldom acknowledged his help, pretending his comments were precisely what I expected. I suspect he knew as much but he allowed my fantasy.

In his written accounts of my adventures, garnered from these visits, my friend found it expedient to insert himself with me at the scene of the action.

"The tale reads better with me as a witness rather than an anonymous narrator," he said. In fact the good Doctor was present in only a few of my minor cases but I cannot argue with the success of his published stories. I still wonder, however, at the public's acceptance of a doctor whose colleagues readily, and often, looked after his practice while he was on the trace with me. Even more troubling was a wife who encouraged him to go off on obviously dangerous business. A wife so agreeable you shouldn't

want to leave. Then again if she would see you in harms way, without so much as a protest or admonition . . . Well then, that is something else again.

Of those few times when I was feeling appreciative, or perhaps guilt, and I encouraged him to recognize his own character's involvement, he shrugged it off. On one such occasion my notes record him saying "The die is cast Holmes, the public believes you to be the world's greatest detective and I to be . . . I'm not quite sure what they believe me to be. Well, no matter," he laughed, "it would be foolhardy to change now. Would it not?" I could offer no argument.

In the weeks preceding the start of this business, his drop-ins had become sporadic and brief. At times four days would pass before he would come by and he had not been to tea in a fortnight. Our now infrequent breakfast visits consisted of him bolting coffee while talking constantly, allowing me no opportunity for interrogation. On that last morning visit, before he accepted my assistance, Watson was most unlike himself. He had no interest in my current case, a minor puzzle concerning a missing Object D' Art; instead his queries were strange and dissociated. Directed at me and of a personal nature, I answered, although I normally decline such inquiries. Perhaps it was my long and close association with him or the rapid-fire manner in which he delivered his probes or the combination but I found myself divulging occurrences and sentiments that I usually kept to myself, if I thought about them at all. His raking interrogatories were reminiscent of a barrister and a witness at the dock, a situation I found most unfamiliar. I became aware of a growing and familiar discomfort in my head.

"See here Watson," I protested after a particularly lengthy exchange, "why are you badgering me with these questions? I realize our long alliance is reason for familiarity but even for you, I must say, I find your manner offensive."

"Quite right Holmes. Quite right," he stammered. "Please forgive me. I'm afraid I've not been myself of late. I'm sure you've noticed, nothing much escapes your observation."

"Of course I've noticed. How could I not?" I replied hoping this would at last afford me an opportunity for a thorough cross-examination.

"Yes, well I'm afraid I haven't been much in the way of company these last weeks, much less assistance," he said apologetically, "but I have some rather serious business involving . . . one of my patients. Serious indeed."

And then he was out of the chair, hat in one hand and reaching for the door latch with the other. "I must push off. I trust I didn't overly trouble you with my ruminations, as I've said it's rather a bit of a snarl I've found myself in."

I stood quickly and reaching out for his free hand took hold of it preventing him from gaining the door.

"Can I be of assistance old fellow or is this purely a medical dilemma you find yourself in?"

He paused, the stiffness of just a moment before relaxing away. He answered slowly.

"The problem is at least partially medical, by my estimate at any rate, though there are more than a few who would disagree. They would have you believe it is a judicial matter and nothing more. As for your kind offer, I would greatly appreciate, indeed I am in need of, your assistance but I have a few more particulars that must be dealt with before I involve you. Now if you will excuse me I must get about them. Good day Holmes." He turned the latch and was gone, leaving me alone with an aching head.

It should be no surprise, if you are the least bit familiar with my reputation, that nothing excites me more so than a good mystery. Of that trait there has been no exaggeration in Watson's tales. Watson had just presented me with something considerably more interesting than a purloined ring. A simple matter whose conclusion I had just yesterday presented to the authorities. I would not wait to hear from Watson. I often had less to start with than the meager information he had afforded me and I was intrigued. More so, perhaps, since it was my good friend Watson who was in need of my talents and obviously he was keeping something from me. This was most unlike Watson, and I considered the matter quite serious. Quite serious indeed. If I were to be any help to him at all I must discover what it was he was reluctant to divulge.

Numerous methods were available to me to assemble information. Using the deductive reasoning method that I championed, I systematically eliminate all possibilities until only one remains. My library was stocked with the most recent reference sources available, not the least important was my personal

file on numerous subjects. This file was largely the result of my experiments in the application of scientific techniques, and notes and observations made during my pursuits. Additionally I had an informal arrangement with a colorful group of alley rascals, the aforementioned Baker Street Irregulars. For the promise of a few shillings they could gather an amazing wealth of information. I started them on the trace a fortnight before, when Watson's behavior drew my attention.

The Irregulars observation of Watson over the preceding two weeks revealed he had seen only six patients at his office. Of the six walk-ins, four had been seen more than once, one having visited five times. He visited King's College Hospital every afternoon until two days before when his patient, Admiral John Hastings died. I had just that morning read his obituary in the Times and Watson had indeed been mentioned as "friend and attending physician". The cause of death was poetically phrased as "succumbed to the ravages of time, aged eighty-two."

The walk-ins seen just once were Mr. Andrew Firth and Mr. James Coopersmith, Firth in the middle of the first week, Coopersmith at the beginning of the second. Having two visits were: Mrs. Fielding the seamstress, twice the first week, Mr. Hogan the butcher twice the second week, and the Reverend Thomas Payton from St. George's, one visit each week. Each of these individuals was known to me, some I was acquainted with, and others I was simply aware of whom they were. The pattern of their coming and going was entirely consistent with any real or imagined complaint they may have had. It was the sixth visitor, the one with five visits, who raised my interest. The visitor was a stranger in our locale and was not recognized by my unofficial agents.

The Irregulars reported that he always arrived by hansom, the driver instructed to wait, sometimes for more than an hour and a quarter. He was middle aged and portly, fashionably dressed and carried a leather case and silver capped walking stick. Brewster, the most clever of the Irregulars, was able to engage one of the hansom drivers in idle chatter and discovered that he had picked up his passenger at Dewers, Cheevers & Howe one of London's most prestigious law establishments. I considered it doubtful that he visited Watson with any medical affection, more likely than not he was involved in, or cause for, Watson's dilemma.

Dewers, Cheevers & Howe were masters in the field of estates, titles and inheritance matters, an area in which I had just recently taken interest that I might better unravel a vexing problem for a client. I had followed these challenges in the Times and had noted that the petitioner having Dewers, Cheevers and Howe in their corner were usually successful. So sure their reputation, it was rumored some bankers would advance credit simply on their acceptance of a case. I could not, of course, be sure if Watson regarded his visitor as threatening or friendly but I decided, at the very least, the mysterious caller would be a powerful ally or a challenging adversary. Until I heard from Watson on the matter there was little more I could do except gather all the information I could on the subject. My personal library, and of course the Times, would be well rummaged.

To my dismay the Times did not prove much help. Even the old copies, scattered about my rooms, going back a month or more, had nothing I could connect Watson with directly. Aside from the obituary of Admiral John Hastings no reference to Watson's other patients could be found. Neither did Dewers, Cheevers & Howe seem to be engaged in anything newsworthy. Watson had, I remembered, intimated it was one of his patients and not he that was in distress but I was not entirely convinced of that, I detected some hesitation in his voice when he made that assertion. His out of character behavior also coincided with the decline and death of Admiral Hastings, so the consequent visits from Dewers, Cheevers, & Howe might be of some significance. In any event at that point, given the meager information at my disposal, I could neither eliminate nor settle on that track.

I was not to see Watson for nearly a week after that morning. I used the time to school myself as best I could in matters of Estate Law. As was often the case, I was able, through acute observation, to determine what area of expertise would be needed to bring a mystery to a close. To my colleagues it usually appeared that I was in possession of this knowledge all along, considering it elementary. Observation and preparation were the keys to my success. Nothing more. If Dewers, Cheevers & Howe were involved, no smart man would bet against an inheritance challenge of sorts.

On the eve of Watson's return I had just finished putting together a list of known facts and possible related events under the title of Watson's Dilemma. The pain in my head had not subsided but neither had it progressed to the level that sometimes rendered me incapable of all but the most trivial studies. I

was preparing to take to my bed when the sound of the bell persuaded me to delay. Moments later I heard Mrs. Hudson tread upon the stair. I timed her arrival at my door and opened it to find her right hand raised, about to knock.

"Mr. Holmes," she said, looking just a bit startled. "I saw the light under your door and thought this shouldn't wait until morning." She handed me a telegram.

"I suspect you heard the bell, it was the messenger service."

"Yes, thank you Mrs. Hudson"

"Will there be a reply or should I give him his leave?"

I open the envelope and read the brief message.

"No. No reply. Goodnight Mrs. Hudson."

It was from Watson and read as follows

LEAVING EDINBURGH. ARRIVE TO-MORROW PADDINGTON STATION IN

TIME FOR TEA. THE GAME IS AFOOT

Watson's choice of words amused me. The game is afoot indeed. I was beginning to understand how Watson must have felt when I involved him in my adventures and I held all the cards. The table was turned and I now found myself sitting in an unfamiliar position. I was comforted by the thought that if my suspicion of an estate problem involving Dewers, Cheevers and Howe proved correct I could use that as an entry. Watson, being little different from most, would assume I knew much more than I did and in a short while would lay the whole of the problem before me. I would just smile and nod my head affirmatively. It never ceases to amaze how much you can learn by bluff and bluster. As my reputation increased, due largely to Watson's literary skill at embellishment, it was sometimes sufficient only to be introduced and the facts and clues were freely proffered. Thus reassured I turned down the light and settled under the coverlet.

Perhaps it was the telegram. Perhaps not, but that night a familiar dream took on a new expression. Gone was the accustomed road and in its place were railroad tracks. On the wind I could discern the unmistakable sound of bagpipes. They seemed to be calling to me, beckoning me to come. I

felt I had to reach them but, just as before, I was having great difficulty. My upper body and mind were fresh and alert but my legs felt thick and heavy, as if made of lead. I could scarcely move them, much less walk. Again I had an overwhelming feeling that something needed my attention and I must get to it, but I could not move and sat down on the track. I felt no personal hazard, only utter frustration and helplessness.

The fantasy repeated itself through the night, and each time I was about to ascertain who it was that needed me, I awoke. It was not a full awakening, just enough to know I had been dreaming. I had no trouble returning to my slumbers, so driven was I to put a name and a face to this puzzlement. Before this night it was only in the midst of the intense fatigue following cocaine therapy that I had a sense it was a woman whom I was striving in vain to reach. But being without the benefit of its stimulation for more than a fortnight I could not be au fait with this new manifestation.

In the morning the urgency I felt in the dream the night before was gone. The frustration also was absent, replaced by an intense curiosity as to what to make of this recurring phantasm. The desire to put an end to these nightmares was so powerful that when they came upon me it dominated my waking hours. I was able to put aside my fascination in this only if something more tangible and challenging occupied me. It was when not presented with stimulating cases that I reached for the cocaine ampoule in an attempt to discover what it was that I so desperately felt I had to do. I discounted the significance of the woman in the dream inasmuch as I regarded women as obstacles to achievement. I enjoyed the license being a bachelor provided and was committed to this status.

Watson did indeed arrive in time for tea, thanks to the timeliness of the British Railway System. I heard his hansom rattle to a stop just as Mrs. Hudson brought up a grand set-up of cakes and jellies, blanc-manges, jam tarts and cold meat sandwiches. She was on her way down the stairs to get the tea when the bell rang. In a moment Watson was standing before me, looking drawn and weary.

"As promised," I said, "just in time for tea."

"Thank you. I should think I am in need of some refreshment after this trip."

"Not a pleasant journey I take it."

"It was the purpose of the roundabout that proved trying. I should like to acquaint you with the particulars if I may."

"Soon enough," I said, feigning apathy, "but here is Mrs. Hudson with the tea."

"Hello, what's this?" he said, noticing the provender already in place, as Mrs. Hudson set down the tea. "I can tell you I haven't seen such as this while on the trace. It's good to be back."

Chapter Two

Watson's Story

After a leisurely and civilized tea Watson seemed much recovered from the rigors of travel. Mrs. Hudson cleared away the board and we took our chairs and pipes to the fire.

"Now then Watson," I said "what problems have you become heir to that has you chasing off to the highlands"?

The question was deliberately phrased. The word "heir" could suggest legal affairs, bearing on estates and inheritance, to someone involved in that task, yet was ambiguous enough to allow other interpretation. I would know soon enough, by Watson's reaction, if I were on the right track.

"I should think I would be used to this by now," he said taking the bait, "but you still manage to astound me. How is it you seem to know what I am up against when I am just now realizing the extent of the matter?"

His questions gave weight to my only possibility. A few more carefully worded statements, if needed, and I would know as much as Watson.

"Observation Watson, nothing more or less," I said.

"Perhaps then you will be good enough to share your observations."

"I shall be happy to, but first how did you get caught up in all this?" I said, stalling, expecting he himself would provide me with the very answers to his questions.

"It is a complicated matter I find myself in, I scarcely know where to begin"

"Then by all means begin at the beginning"

"Quite right. Does the name Molle', Henry Molle' mean anything to you?"

"Only that you have asked me that very question on occasion in the past." I said, annoyed. The pounding in my head had suddenly intensified, leaving me with little patience and I thought perhaps my discomfiture due to the Admiral Hastings path evaporating with Watson's unexpected inquiry.

"I thought, perhaps since you attended the University at about the same time . . . "

"We presumably had different interests," I interrupted, instantly aware of the severity of my retort. I softened my voice as best I could, "Please go on."

Watson seemed not to take offense, indeed he was no doubt used to my sharp tone.

"I became acquainted with Henry Molle', he began, "shortly after my separation from the Army. My physical condition precluded me from entering a medical practice and my government stipend was not adequate in covering my living expenses. I was fast outpacing my reserves. One afternoon as I stood waiting for a table at the Savoy, the Head Waiter approached and asked if I were John Watson. When I told him I was indeed, he pointed out a table against the front window where a well-dressed gentleman was smiling and beckoning me over. At first I was at a loss but then I recognized him as an old study-mate of what seemed so long ago. Happy at my good fortune, both in finding a table and a familiar face I hurried over. He greeted me warmly and begged me to sit. He confided that he saw me through the window as I approached the door but my worn-out appearance at first caused him to doubt my identity. He was greatly alarmed at my condition and inquired as to what brought me to that state. I acquainted him with my misadventures in the Afghan campaign and assured him that contrary to my appearance I was on the mend."

"He was extremely interested in my military service, particularly in any familiarity I had dealing with nervous indisposition and the like. So joyful was I to have a friendly ear, after so many months alone in London, I readily recounted my experiences. It so happened that before my own injury, I was assigned to a ward where the patients had minor physical damage but were not responding to treatment. I spent much of my time counseling these poor devils and came to the conclusion that the greatest wounds of

war are sometimes to the mind rather than the body and, conversely, that the mind is at least as strong a remedy for the body as the powders and pills of modern medicine."

"When I finished my account he asked if I had seen any cases of amnesia or similar evidences that could be attributed to the stress of combat. I told him I had, but most of my associates did not agree. They were of the opinion that any such complaints were put on, in order to escape the hazard of duty. At the very least, they held, the condition was brought with them to the service. I offered my opinion that every man has his breaking point, though thankfully most never reach it. Those that do, excepting those favored with resources enough, are doomed to some snake-pit asylum with little hope of recovery."

"Our meal by that time had been brought to the table and the conversation turned to reminisces and inquiring mutually as to old classmates. When the waiter brought the charge my companion graciously settled the bill and I assured him that when next we met it would be at my expense."

"He handed me his card, and asked if I might join him for tea the next day, for a professional consultation, saying at the time, that my company on the morrow would satisfy the obligation. I eagerly accepted since I had been so long absent from any social intercourse. I could hardly refuse, by any estimate, since I had already provided him with an account of my empty days and near empty purse."

"The address on the card was 'Beechum Asylum, Kings East Rd., London.' I was aware of the Beechum Asylum. It is a private sanitarium for those suffering from nervous collapse. On my arrival the next afternoon I was escorted from the main gate to the stoop of a three-story house, one of several on the grounds. My escort pulled the bell cord and a stout, no nonsense sort of woman who obviously was expecting me, opened the door. She led me up the stairs to the second floor living quarters where I found my host and another gentlemen waiting."

"Introductions were made and I found myself in the company of none other than the head of the Asylum himself. During tea I was apprised of the sad case of Henry Molle' and the cause for my invitation. Molle' was a patient at the asylum, had been since the untimely death of his wife Mary, almost five years before, in an apparent hunting accident. He had not responded to any technique they brought to bear and it was thought my experiences in the Afghan War, both personal and professional, would be of value. Before coming to Beechum's, Molle' studied at the University and while on vacation in Italy met

and fell in love with Mary MacCann, the only daughter of Angus MacCann a widower from Scotland. They were married in Rome, and returned to her home in Edinburgh. The marriage was quite a shock to her father. Angus MacCann confided to associates that Molle' was too retiring and studious to suit him, but at least he did not appear the fortune hunter, indeed just the opposite. He had hoped for a more aggressive son-in-law to take control of his successful shipping company, having little confidence in his only son John.

I was offered a position at Beechum's but I protested that my condition was not sufficiently recovered to take up a medical career, especially in a physically demanding alienist institution. I was assured my involvement, at first, could be limited to Henry Molle' and was given a brief sketch of their methods. Mollified by my hosts' promises, and needing additional income, I accepted."

"The treatment at Beechums is most unusual and enjoys a far more favorable success rate than similar institutions. The usual physical methods: restraints, ice water immersion, isolation, have been abandoned. They call their approach 'Social Therapy', a technique best described as one friend listening to another. It struck me not much different from the counsel I offered during the war. After a week of instruction and observation I was introduced to Molle', although such was his affliction he had no remembrance of that name. He answered to another and had gone so far as to contrive a history to go with it."

"Gradually I gained his confidence but Molle' failed to respond to any approach I tried. He clung to his new identity and if anything seemed to be falling deeper into his new personality. I felt, perhaps for him, Social Therapy did more to strengthen his false self than weaken it. I wanted to try a more confrontational method but I was governed by my higher-ups. They were confident their treatment promised permanent relief and argued that more time was needed and so we continued in this manner for two years."

"Now it seems confrontation is inevitable, but in a manner more traumatic than I desired. The coroner's inquest into Mrs. Molle's demise returned an open verdict, insufficient evidence for the cause of death. The authorities made this unusual decision perhaps because of questionable circumstances in her recent situation. She was newly married, to someone unknown to the local authorities. Her father was

killed in a rail accident in France shortly after Mary brought her husband home, and the official explanation from French authorities was never accepted by the townspeople. The rumors began almost immediately and Mary's death gave them new authority. Henry rapidly sank into the state I described and was charged to Beechum's, the MacCann estate bearing the cost. Mary's brother John was summoned from America and was appointed by the court to oversee MacCann Transport until such time as Henry Molle' could prove competency. There the matter lay until three months ago when John MacCann petitioned the courts to have his sister's marriage annulled. MacCann Transport is rumored to be in financial difficulties and this would free the MacCann estate of the considerable expense of Henry's treatment. This would leave Henry without support and force him into some lunatic lockup. During the court processes, accusations were made and Henry could be charged with murder. Regardless of the outcome, I can only believe the rigors of trial will drive Henry farther from reality into irrecoverable fantasy and that is why I need your help."

"And you shall have it," I said.

CHAPTER THREE

GETTING TO IT

Watson relit his pipe, which had gone out during his narrative, "I never thought you would refuse," he said.

"What are these new accusations?" I asked.

"McCann has suggested Henry tampered with the gun before offering it to Mary. Purposely plugging it with mud perhaps, an easy enough task in the field."

"And easy enough to prove I should think," I responded. "The police surely considered that possibility."

"One would think," said Watson. "I'll see if I can get my hands on their report."

"That would be most helpful," I said, just a little acerbically. Tell me, Watson, do you believe Molle' innocent?"

"I do indeed."

"And on what do you base that conclusion?" I inquired.

He lay down his briar and rose from the chair. He paused a moment as if gathering his thoughts.

"I am convinced," he said, "his affliction is real and not affected. He has been shocked into this illusion and that alone would indicate his innocence. But also I think the man incapable of murder in either personality. Likely though, it may be he considers himself responsible for his wife's death and that drove him to his present state."

"Responsible," I asked, "how so?"

"It was at his suggestion, she was using his gun when the accident occurred. Doubtless he thought had he not offered the gun, she would still be alive. At any rate the circumstances caused more than a few to question his actions that day, something no doubt a man with his intelligence must have foreseen. Therefore, in my mind, it is unthinkable he planned it."

"Precisely Watson, my thoughts exactly," I lied; the throbbing that had begun in my head impeded any relevant thoughts. "Now then, what do you have to get us started?"

"I have brought with me cuttings of the news accounts of the time and I've added a few lines of information I thought pertinent. I have had transcripts made of the depositions and police notes of the investigation. Also, I have been promised reports, gathered by private investigation, on various related matters. They will be forwarded by messenger as they are completed. I realize your scientific method relies heavily on observation of physical evidence but time has all but obliterated that path and I have only this paper testimony to offer you."

"I've started with less," I said. "When are the charges being brought?"

"On Thursday next. We haven't much time, just nine days. If it goes before the magistrates without defence I fear Molle' is lost."

"Then by all means let us get to it," I said.

"Here is what I've gathered so far," said Watson, handing me a portfolio. "Unless you have questions, I should be going. I've been away awhile and have other affairs to attend to, but no matter, the accounts need no explanation.

"Go," I said, "I shall begin at once."

After Watson had gone, I took the portfolio and settled in for a good read. The local newspaper amounted to little more than a weekly fact sheet, not uncommon in that area. Accustomed as I was to The Times, I found accounts terse and to the point. The first report, put to print just two days after the occurrence, was rather sketchy even for a local press, due no doubt to the level of communications in that locality in those days. It reported the death of Mrs. Henry Molle', the former Mary MacCann, at Glen Burnie, the MacCann family estate, near the village of Drucannon. Information indicated an accidental discharge of her fowling piece.

A vague uneasiness came over me as I read the story. A feeling of familiarity, of *deja vu* as the French would say. I thought perhaps of other cases with similar circumstances but none came readily to mind and I continued reading. Mrs. Molle', a recent bride, had assumed ownership of The MacCann Transport Company upon the untimely death of her father, Angus MacCann, in a rail accident in France. Mr. MacCann, a widower, had been in France on business. The story mentioned a brother, Mr. John MacCann, reportedly living in America and estranged from the family. A coroner's inquiry had been summoned and depositions called. The coroner's verdict was expected in time for the next press.

The familiarity had not abated and as I sat deliberating this first report I nodded off. Perhaps it was the unaccustomed richness of the set-up provided by Mrs. Hudson or maybe the warmth of the hearth but I soon found myself struggling on a wet hillside. A light mist surrounded me as I attempted to get to the crest. Fog shrouded the top and from within the haze I could hear voices crying out for help and urging me up. But with each movement I slid farther down the hill. I felt frustrated and beaten, not knowing whether to stay at that point or persevere and risk sliding farther down. The summit held a siren song attraction but the harder I tried the more ground I lost. My boots could find no purchase on the muddy incline. I tried again and again to gain the top but always slid backward until at last I slipped

over the edge of a precipice and felt myself falling into the mists below. It was at this point I jolted awake, seeped in perspiration.

I recognized it as a permutation of the fantasy I'd been having for as long as I could remember. When last these illusions visited me I found myself on a railroad track in Scotland. I attributed that mutation to Watson's telegram, hinting of trains and Scotland. I was usually able to link a foundation to the manifestation if not the meaning. This time I could not determine the origin of this variation and I was more than a little disquieted. I find it difficult to move on to another riddle without first solving the one before me and I searched for the trigger. I spent some considerable time at this, with no reward, before forcing myself back to Watson's Dilemma.

I opened the portfolio and rummaged about for the follow up news account and soon found it. The paper reported the Coroner's Inquest returned an open verdict, leaving the case unresolved. Insufficient evidence for conclusion was the reason given for the verdict. Testimony was sought from all at the Estate but Mr. Molle' was reported too distraught to give a statement at the inquest. A Mr. Andrew MacCauley, a family friend was reported to have been with Mr. and Mrs. Molle' in the field, along with the estate gamekeeper. It was stated that death was caused by a wound to the head resulting from mechanical failure of the shot-gun used by Mrs. Molle'. Police sources confirmed an explosion at the breech of the weapon. Further tests and examinations were to be performed at Scotland Yard.

Why was Scotland Yard involved in a tragic but routine investigation? Why was the Coroner's inquest inconclusive? There was, I thought, a whisper of suspicion. A whirlwind courtship followed so closely by an accidental death, and than another, might indeed be cause for talk among the servants and townspeople but surely the authorities would be above that. There was more to this story than what I'd read so far.

I began reading the depositions given at the inquest by the servants, the gamekeeper and Mr. MacCauley. Each one, given independently, failed to refute any detail of another. The accounts flowed one by one, giving a detailed report of that fateful day.

Mrs. Campbell, the cook, testified she was asked the night before to provide an early breakfast for the Molle's and Mr. MacCauley who would be taking to the field for grouse in the morning. At dinner the preceding evening she had overheard Mr. MacCauley persuading his hosts to go birding the following morning. Mr. MacCauley was already up and assisting the gamekeeper with the preparations for the field when Mrs. Campbell began cooking breakfast. Mr. MacCauley, an avid hunter, was a frequent guest at the estate in times past, according to Mrs. Campbell, often hunting with John MacCann. Mrs. Campbell allowed that MacCauley's presence surprised her since he had not visited in some time, she thought him no longer welcome at Glen Burnie.

The gamekeeper, Howell Davies, testified he supplied the hunting party with three shot-guns, a converted Hopkins and Allen 20 gauge favored by Mr. Molle', and two Morgan 16 gauge fowling pieces. He also provided three boxes of shells from the estate stock. One box of 20 gauge and two of 16 gauge. These shells, twenty to a box, were custom made for the MacCann estate by the Exmoor Powder and Cartridge Company, London and were imprinted with the MacCann crest. Davies reported that Mrs. Molle' was two misses for two and Mr. Molle' had downed two birds in two attempts. Mr. MacCauley had two misses despite what Davies thought were easy targets. Davies thought MacCauley's performance odd, having on many occasion been witness to MacCauley's prowess with firearms. He was an expert marksman and knowledgeable in all aspects of firearms. Mrs. Molle' blamed her poor showing on the heavy Morgan and Mr. Molle' offered her the lighter 20 gauge.

Mrs. Molle's next shot was successful and then tragedy struck. Mr. Davies stated that he was perhaps 300 yards behind, back at the wagon with Mr. MacCauley when he saw Mrs. Molle' fall. For an instant he didn't know what happened, it wasn't until the sound of the report reached him that he realized she had even fired the gun. He drove the wagon to the scene and helped Mr. MacCauley place Mrs. Molle' in the wagon. Mr. Molle' was in shock and in no condition to assist.

Testimony from Mr. MacCauley recalled how he became acquainted with the MacCann family through Mr. John MacCann, whom he met at school. MacCauley visited frequently and was often present at social functions at the estate. He stated that he arose early and with the gamekeeper prepared for the hunt. He helped Mr. Davies select the guns and load the wagon. He said he had taken the birds back to

the wagon and was not facing the Molle's when the accident occurred but he knew from the sound something was amiss. Turning, he saw Mrs. Molle' fall to the ground. He rushed, with the gamekeeper, who had also returned to the wagon, to her side. They lifted her to the wagon and returned to the house.

The dim light from the gas mantle began to strain my eyes. The pain in my head had increased and was fast approaching the point of intolerability. I closed my eyes for a moment to rest them.

The knocking at the door startled me awake and I could hear someone calling.

"Sir, come quickly there's been an accident"

I sprang from my chair and opened the door to find, not Mrs. Hudson but a younger, slimmer woman, who looked vaguely familiar.

"Downstairs," she said, "in the wagon"

"Where is Mrs. Hudson?" I asked.

"Please Sir you must come. Downstairs"

There was no delaying her in her present state and in my slippers and robe I followed her down the stairs. We reached the front door and she opened it, flooding the dark entry hall with a misty daylight. Through the open door I perceived the shadowy silhouette of a horse and wagon in the fog. Several people were gathered around the wagon but I could not quite see their faces. As it is with most, when awoken suddenly, there is a moment of confusion. I was still trying to gather my thoughts, my mind could not accept the daylight where the night should have been. I must have slept through til morning I reasoned. The unexpected light and mist played tricks with my eyes as I moved closer to the door. The familiar houses across the street had the look of tree-covered hills and even the dark cobbles of the road resembled a light coloured gravel path.

Trying to put order to these confusing particulars, I heard behind me the unmistakable voice of Mrs. Hudson.

"Are you alright Sir? Is there someone at the door? I didn't hear the bell."

Turning to face her I saw she was alone, the candle in her hand the only light in the hall. I turned again to the open door and saw only rooftops outlined in the clear moonlight.

It seemed so real yet it must have been a dream that brought me to the door. A feeling of *deja vu* again nagged at my consciousness. I was disconcerted and did not want to admit my foolishness. I mumbled something about hearing a knock at the door. Not too convincingly I thought. Mrs. Hudson recognized my symptoms, having seen them before at close hand. Graciously ignoring my embarrassment she offered something to help me sleep. I accepted and withdrew to my rooms where I took to my bed.

I slept until mid-day but nevertheless awoke feeling worn and depressed, the pain in my head still there. My sleep had again been filled with frightening dreams. Not the dreams of frustration and helplessness of the last few nights but the old dreams of fear and dread. The scenes and situations changed rapidly as with most nightmares but central to all was Professor Moriarity.

He was there, in control, and I his prisoner. I saw him first seated behind a desk while I sat before him strapped to a chair. His eyes, never blinking, looked through me to my very soul as he interrogated me. His voice was calm, but I was not taken in by his attempts to soothe me. I saw through his masquerade. He was sinister and evil and I hated and feared him. Next I saw him staring at me through a window in the room in which I was imprisoned. He seemed to be everywhere watching my every move. When I ate, I felt his eyes. When I tried to sleep, he was there at the window. I fought to stay awake for fear of his assault. I could not get shed of him. Friends and associates floated through these visions. I saw Lestrade, through the window, and called out to him to help me, but he just smiled and nodded when I tried to apprise him of Moriarity's evil. Again and again I tried but Lestrade would not listen to me. Mrs. Hudson came by regularly with food but she too seemed not to believe me. Only Watson, who appeared frequently, would listen to my allegation of Moriarity's danger with a sympathetic ear but even he offered no escape or remedy for my situation.

In the past, when the nightmares came, I had relied on cocaine to sweeten my nights and sometimes my days. Now without it I knew I must get completely into Watson's Dilemma if I were to find any relief. Mrs. Hudson heard my stumbling about and brought me coffee and a bit of bread and cheese. After eating I went again to the portfolio.

Watson had apparently arranged the contents in a particular sequence. He knew from his long association with me which order would be of most benefit to my methods. The next item confirmed my first impression. It was a news cutting older than the first two. The story concerned Angus MacCann's death.

Mr. MacCann, travelling alone on business, apparently fell from the train as it crossed the Rhone Valley Bridge. He was last seen in the dining car at 8:45 pm local time with an acquaintance he encountered and was not missed until he failed to answer his requested 6:00 a.m. wake-up call. When he could not be located on board authorities were notified and a search of the route was initiated. His body was discovered at noon local time by mounted patrol. His dining companion could not be located and witnesses report he disembarked shortly after dinner.

French authorities ruled his death accidental. It was surmised that Mr. MacCann slipped to his death while returning to his private compartment from the dining car.

Now I understood the suspicion. It wasn't a train disaster, as I surmised from the first news accounts I read, but rather a singular incident involving one passenger. He could easily have slipped from the car, as the French Authorities ruled, or just as easily been thrown. Just a link in a chain of bad luck or the willful hand of a murderer. I spent some time puzzling over what I'd read so far. Numerous scenarios played out in my mind but I was having difficulty keeping the facts straight. I found myself inventing implausible reasons explaining Mrs. Molle's accident and Mr. MacCann's death.

Watson came by for tea and I was inexplicably happy to see him. I was feeling just a bit muddled, no doubt due to lack of uninterrupted sleep. From when I first met him, Watson had always represented a dependable friend and confidant. I did not wish to trouble him needlessly, he seemed to have troubles enough with Henry Molle', and did my best to keep my indisposition to myself. But it was not enough. I suspect even Watson's medical training was unnecessary to gauge my condition.

"I say Holmes, are you all right. You look a sight."

"No cause for alarm," I protested. "I haven't been sleeping well but I'm up to the task."

With my permission he drew me to the window and examined my eyes. He measured my pulse and had me perform a few manual tasks. "Does the light bother your eyes?" He asked.

"Yes."

"Are you having headaches?"

"Yes, and the light makes them worse, but I think I am just tired."

"I could leave something with Mrs. Hudson, if you like, to help you sleep."

"That might be helpful." I said, wishing instead for a vial of cocaine but not soliciting it, knowing Watson's disapproval of my therapeutic application.

"Consider it done. Now then what have you come up with?"

Watson seemed anxious and worried. It was most out of character. I knew Watson to be a caring physician, but he was also a realist and acknowledged the natural course of circumstance. He was often frustrated in his practice of healing but he knew when nothing more could be done and he accepted that. This case was different and I did not have a clue why. He gave the unmistakable impression that I must succeed.

"I haven't finished with the portfolio yet." I said. "I've been having difficulty concentrating. Perhaps with your prescription I'll come about."

"You must get some rest before you continue with this. You'll better unravel this business with a good sleep behind you. I'll leave instructions with Mrs. Hudson and I expect you will follow her direction."

His tone was authoritarian. I felt strangely addled but could not gather my thoughts for an argument, nor could I find the energy to protest. I knew at once that he was right.

"I am expecting some additional reports and when they come I'll bring them round," he said. "I'll send Mrs. Hudson up with a remedy, it will help you sleep. Until tomorrow then Holmes." He left me there by the fire.

Mrs. Hudson appeared presently with a cup of hot water and a glassine envelope. "Dr. Watson says you're to take this now," she said, in a no nonsense way, opening the envelope and mixing the contents with the water.

"What is this?"

"It's to help you sleep".

I took the cup and swallowed the slightly bitter liquid. I did not recognize the taste; it was new to me. I thought to ask Watson what it was when next I saw him, so as to add it to my personal list of identifiable chemicals.

Chapter Four

The Past and the Present

I don't remember moving from the chair to the bed, but that is where I awoke. In between, Moriarity again visited my thoughts. Not one dream, but a succession of strange, unconnected, rapidly changing crisis'. I found myself again under his control but still could find no clear motive for his action. No matter what task I attempted in my dreams I found him to be a formidable and menacing obstacle. I was not always unaccompanied in these situations. Sometimes neighbours and acquaintances were in it with me. We all seemed prisoners of Moriarity, whom I saw as the most fearsome yet important person I must deal with. When he questioned me I lied and acted as if to join with him so as to effect my escape, but he was too clever for me. At times I seemed successful in my schemes and victory close at hand, but he would trick me up with his words and find me out.

Past adventures played out in my mind in a most confusing manner. Details were mixed one case with another so I scarcely recognized them. After awhile I began to doubt my memory of these events. I thought of my personal journal and began looking for it. My search took me through narrow hallways and dark rooms. Coming across Watson, I asked as to my journal. He shook his head and pointed to a door with a sliver of light showing at the bottom. Opening the door quietly, I saw Moriarity at his desk reading. He did not hear me and I was able to get close enough to recognize my journal before he looked up and put the book in a drawer.

I was mistaken, he said. It was not my journal and moreover was not any of my business. He called out an alarm and Lestrade appeared and escorted me from the office and back to my room. I asked him why he was doing this but he would not answer me. Perhaps most disturbing in all of this was that Watson and Lestrade seemed to be in league with Moriarity. The feeling of betrayal was unbearable and I felt extremely alone and depressed.

I fought these images even in my sleep, not fully accepting them as reality. I could not admit the treachery of my closest associates. I would examine their actions and invent benign reasons for their deeds. Just as my successes with Moriarity could vanish in an instant under his probing so too could their innocence under mine. My frustration and resignation deepened.

The sound of a storm drew my attention to the window. I thought I could hear someone calling me. Through the bars, in the distance, I could see a man standing on the edge of a cliff, overlooking the sea. The storm was whipping the waves over the edge with a great crashing noise. He was calling to me and asking for help. I could not quite discern his features but there was something vaguely familiar about him. I don't know why, but I knew it was Henry Molle'. I tried to answer him but each time I spoke the wind and waves drowned out my voice and he could not hear me. The rain and mist moved in from the sea until I could see or hear him no longer.

Returning to the cot, I heard again someone calling me. I could not tell if the sound came through the window or the door. I answered, but he seemed not to hear me. Louder and louder I shouted but he did not acknowledge my cries.

"Holmes! Holmes!" I heard. "Wake up. You've had enough sleep. We've work to do."

I opened my eyes and found myself on my bed in my rooms. Watson stood over me with an anxious look about him. Sunlight streamed through the windows, I knew it was early morning. I was, at the same time, relieved and confused. It was just a dream but what was Watson going on about and why was he here at this hour, it couldn't be much past sunrise. And then suddenly, briefly, I thought of Henry Molle'. For an instant I understood his fear and confusion. For an instant all seemed clear. And then it was gone.

"What time is it?" I asked, gathering my thoughts.

"It's just past eight, Saturday morning. You've slept round the clock."

"Why ever did Mrs. Hudson let me sleep like this? I should have a word with her."

"It was at my direction. Whether you will admit it or not you needed that rest. I thought it best."

"I didn't think we could afford the time," I said, remembering a deadline of sorts.

"I should think a well-rested Holmes would be far more productive than a worn out one. Won't you agree?"

I could offer no argument with that logic, and at the moment my thoughts were anything but clear. As good as I considered myself I knew I was at best mediocre when I could focus on nothing but the pounding in my head. Thinking about it, I realized the pain was gone. In its stead was the muddled feeling, not unlike a morning after a night of excesses. For as long as I could remember my head was usually pounding or muddled. Only when working on a mystery or stimulated with cocaine could I find relief. That is, I think, what made me like a bulldog in a pit when started on a case. I could not let go until the job was done, else the pounding would return and I would reach for the cocaine vial.

Watson had brought a tray of coffee, sweet rolls, jam and butter, for which I was most grateful. I had nothing to eat since yesterday's tea.

"How are you feeling?" Watson asked, pouring the coffee. "You're looking a bit better, if I'm any judge."

I was having trouble separating scenes of my nightmare from the specifics of the case but I did not want to worry Watson.

"Yes, much better, that sleep has done the world for me," I lied, trying to keep my confusion hidden while I sought order and understanding. Perhaps after coffee, my head would clear. In the meantime I would try the bluff and bluster regimen on Watson.

"What have you for me today?" I said, as confidently as I could.

"I have the Yard's report on the shotgun," Watson began. "I received it yesterday but when I came round and looked in on you I decided to let you be." "Do we have Inspector Lestrade to thank?" I asked.

"No not Lestrade. He could not help us with this. I've another friend, who is attached to the Yard and is indebted to me. It took not a little cajoling, these records are under seal pending the resumption of the inquest, but he finally came through. He would not let me look at them but he gave me a summation and allowed me to make notes."

Watson often surprised me. It seems he has his own Irregulars. I did not ask his friend's name or the nature of his association with Scotland Yard. If he wanted me to know, or thought I needed that information, he would have offered it. If he thought otherwise no amount of coaxing would get it out of him.

"And what was in the report?" I asked, as I took the coffee, hoping to clear my head.

"The shotgun used by Mrs. Molle," Watson began, "was a Hopkins & Allen 'Blackmoor' model which had been converted to a breech gun. As originally manufactured it was a lightweight weapon of twenty gauge with a short stock suitable for field or brush. Unmodified it was capable of loading up to three-fourths ounce of shot of any measure. The recommended powder charge was sixty grains fffg, ignited by a number twelve percussion cap."

"Nothing of note so far." I said. "What do you mean by 'unmodified'?"

"The gun was converted from a percussion cap front loader to shell gun"

"Why was that?" I asked.

"Conversions of this kind are not uncommon, especially with a prized fowling piece."

Watson continued reading from his notes. "The report described the metal as ornately worked and inlaid with silver. The stock and fore-piece were intricately carved walnut. Barrel failure had occurred just forward of the breech, the breech itself and lock were undamaged. Three possible causes were identified; overheating during the conversion process, a faulty shell, and a plugged barrel. Scotland Yard found no evidence of overheating and examination of the seventeen remaining shells recovered from the box revealed no surprises. Likewise there was no evidence of a plugged barrel, although it was noted the gun had been recovered from a small stream, where it had fallen during the race from the field to the Estate. The water could have loosened and removed any mud plugging the barrel."

"No doubt that possibility is the basis for McCann's allegations," I offered.

"Yes, exactly," said Watson.

I was still having trouble focusing my thoughts. I could not keep on one track with the facts. My mind seemed to be racing in different directions and I began to think in pictures rather than words. That was not unusual with me; I often visualized problems when searching for solutions, one scene leading

logically to another. Now different images flashed in my mind and I could not connect them. Each discernment brought a question, which I posed to Watson.

"Watson," I said, "you have read the depositions. How many birds did Mr. Molle' down before the accident?"

"It was two, if memory serves."

"Memory serves," I said "and no misses by him?"

"None were reported," said Watson.

"And after the weapon exchange Mrs. Molle' had one hit before the fatal shot."

"Yes, that's right," said Watson.

"And yet you report that Scotland Yard examined seventeen remaining shells from the 20 gauge box."

"It doesn't add up," exclaimed Watson recognizing my point. "We've got an extra shell."

"We've got a murder," said I

"Murder! I should say so," said Watson. "That's what the police are now saying. But certainly you don't suspect Molle'?"

"Of course not," I said, affirming Watson's earlier conclusion.

"Then who...how?"

"Isn't it obvious," I stalled, hoping Watson might have some thoughts, for I had none that made sense. Images raced through my head, one after the other. I wasn't sure which were my deductive visualizations and which were realities.

"Not to me, not yet, but I suspect you will make it clear for me as always," said Watson.

I was on the spot now but all I could manage was, "All in due time, Watson, all in due time," as I struggled to gather my thoughts, "I've some few loose threads to tie up."

"Yes, well I'll let you get at it. I must be off. My other patients need attention. I'll see you for tea then?"

"Yes, of course, for tea."

Chapter Five

Déjà vu

In truth I had no logical reason to believe Molle' innocent, only Watson's assessment. But he had proven in many times past a good judge of character. I was certain it was not mud alone that caused the gun failure.

"We've got an extra shell," I began as we sat at tea, "an altered one as you shall soon see, and that is the heart of the matter. Now who could have supplied an extra shell? Davies, of course, could easily have done it, but to what end? And surely he must have known, in his position, he would be the first to come under scrutiny. No I think not. Then there is Molle', he too had the opportunity to add an altered shell to the box but again, to what end."

"You're not forgetting the inheritance are you?" said Watson, supplying a motive. "Mrs. Molle' came into quite a fortune upon the death of her father. There are some that think that reason enough."

"No not at all but if that were the case, why is Molle' under your care. Not exactly my idea of profit. Besides there was no time for him to arrange the mishap, the hunting excursion was agreed to only the night before if you will remember. And mind you, not a little preparation was needed, as you will see. "

"Amazing Holmes," exclaimed Watson.

"Elementary Watson, elementary."

"But how . . . "

"Patience my dear fellow," I interrupted. "All in due time."

I was stalling, desperately stringing my thoughts together as I went on, hoping to come to a logical conclusion.

"First," I continued, "the shell. We now know of an unaccounted shell. All testimony agrees to that, including the explosion, four rounds were fired from the Hopkins & Allen 16 gauge yet seventeen shells were left in the box."

"Yes, that's right." Replied Watson.

"So the only conclusion one can reach is an extra shell added by persons unknown. And since we have an unusual occurrence at hand it may be surmised that this extra shell was the cause."

"How so?" Said Watson.

"Quite simply. The gun was fired three times that morning before it exploded, so that quite probably eliminates a plugged barrel. Now I realize the barrel could have become accidentally plugged with mud just before the fatal discharge, it was a damp day according to the reports, but this is unlikely, all at hand were experienced in the field. No, the shotgun wasn't at fault, it had to be the load."

"I say Holmes, said Watson "even for you this is a stretch."

"Ah, but there is other evidence Watson, for my conclusion. If you will let me continue." I said abruptly. My mind was racing now.

"So sorry," apologized Watson. "Please go on."

"Davies testified when the gun exploded, he did not at first know what happened. He saw Mrs. Molle' fall and until the sound reached him did not even realize she had fired. Why didn't he see the smoke from the explosion? Because there was no smoke to be seen," I said, without waiting for a reply. "The shell was loaded with nitrocellulose." I said with finality, as if there could be no other conclusion.

"What's that you say? said Watson. "Nitro what?"

"Nitrocellulose, also called guncotton or smokeless powder."

"Aah," replied Watson, "I've heard of guncotton. Didn't know its proper name."

"Even today," I expounded, "it is not well known and back when all this occurred few were aware of it. Only true gun aficionados or regimental chaps would likely know of it. It was first experimented with in 1845 as a smokeless propellant for field pieces and naval guns but it proved too powerful and unstable. After many trials and exploded ordinance, a correct charge would be found, only to prove inadequate on subsequent tests. It was either too weak or too powerful. Storage, temperature, humidity, almost anything seemed to affect it and trials were abandoned by the military. Experiments continued however, and in 1884, in France, a man named Paul Vieille successfully stabilized the compound, but it remained too powerful for most weapons, especially large cannon and naval guns."

"How's that?" Said Watson. "I take that to mean it has some legitimate use."

"Quite so. The newer, smaller, guns are adapted to it; an improvement in the steel that has only recently been developed allows it. It has other benefits besides the absence of smoke; it is very clean burning allowing many firings before fouling. Using nitrocellulose in older weapons however, almost always causes failure and injury or worse." I said. "And an avid sportsman and gunner would be aware of this."

"An apt description of Andrew MacCauley," exclaimed Watson.

"Exactly." I replied.

"And now Holmes, what is your theory about this? You've got that look about you, and I've known you long enough to know what it means. Come now don't keep me in suspense, what have you deduced?"

"Well Watson, I don't have it all put together yet," I blurted, surprising myself and I suspect Watson with this rare admission. "I've yet to come up with a motive, but I am sure of the modus operandi. Andrew MacCauley, for reasons still unknown, was surely the murderer here, and a cold blooded murderer at that, since it took not a little planning to substitute an altered shell. There is the matter of the MacCann crest. MacCauley probably pocketed a shell on a previous outing and replaced the blackpowder with nitrocellulose. It's a simple task with shotgun shells, the ends of the paper board are simply crimped over, no task at all for an experienced gunner such as MacCauley."

"That certainly explains the technical details," said Watson. "but what of the operational? How could MacCauley be assured that Mrs. Molle' would use the 20 gauge?"

"He couldn't, of course." I said. "Which can only mean Mrs. Molle' was not the intended victim."

"You mean to say it was Henry he was after? I thought you were heading towards an inheritance scheme but Henry's death would have profited no one, least of all MacCauley," said Watson.

I could offer no answer. My thoughts were racing as I considered and rejected motive after motive. Facts and possibilities flashed about and mixed one with the other. I wanted so much not to disappoint Watson but my nightmares began intruding into my deliberations and I was becoming thoroughly confused. At this point in a case, I am usually sharp and alert, anxious to bring the mystery to

conclusion, but my head was spinning. It was as if I had arisen too quickly, but I never left the chair.

Watson noticed my condition and inquired.

"I say Holmes, are you all right?"

"I don't know. I feel a bit odd." I didn't know how else to explain the way I felt. "Odd" seemed the best description.

"I think you should lie down for a bit. I should not have allowed you to get right into this. I've taken you from a sound sleep to full action in just a flick of time. Take a lie down and we'll get back to it soon enough."

I was on to something, just what, I didn't know. I was afraid to stop, lest I lose it, but at the same time afraid I didn't have the strength to continue. The feeling of *deja vu* that I had grown accustomed to returned as I let Watson help me to the couch.

"If you don't mind" he said. "I must leave for a bit. There is something I must attend to. Rest if you can, I'll be back directly and we'll have another go at this."

I lay on the couch, considering all evidence and possibilities. I would get no rest until this matter was resolved. The tragedy played out in my mind as a stage drama and I the director. Each piece of evidence was cataloged in my memory and I used them as scenes in a play. Over and over again I rearranged the scenes, rejecting what didn't fit. That is my method. At last I had an answer. Not a complete answer, a few details needed filling in, but an answer.

So engrossed was I at this pursuit that I was not aware of the time. Mrs. Hudson's knock on the door made me aware that I had been at this for over four hours, it was just passed three p.m.

"Dr. Watson sends word that he'll be arriving in an hour with a Mr. Tomlinson."

"Splendid," I said. I could scarcely wait to tell him my deductions. The name Tomlinson was not familiar to me but I assumed if Watson was bringing him to my rooms he must have something to offer regarding Watson's dilemma.

"Mrs. Hudson, could I impose on you for tea and refreshments, for myself and my guests? I don't know why but I feel famished."

"I'll put the kettle on and see what I can knock up." She replied and then added, "Looks as if you could use a bit of refreshing yourself. I'll send up some hot water."

A glance in the mirror gave me a fright. My hair was disheveled and greasy, the stubble on my face looked only a few days short of a beard. My clothes were wrinkled and soiled. I could not remember just when I'd last changed them. The hot water arrived and I put it to good use.

Watson arrived with Tomlinson as I was putting on my smoking jacket. Tomlinson, fashionably dressed and carrying a leather case, followed Watson into the room. He appeared to be about fifty years of age and evidently not used to carrying his stout body up a flight of stairs for he was out of breath. I could imagine him handing his hat, coat & silver capped walking stick to Mrs. Hudson in the foyer below.

"Allow me to introduce" began Watson. "Mr. Anthony Tomlinson of the firm . . ."

"Dewers, Cheevers & Howe." I finished.

"Why yes, that's right." Said Watson, surprised. "How ever did you know that? Have you met?"

"No, but if you will finish the introductions I'll not be able to deny that any longer." I said, feeling a bit smug with my knowledge.

Tomlinson was introduced as the chief investigator for Dewers, Cheevers & Howe. I nodded as Watson completed the formalities, feigning prior possession of the information. The look on their faces, more so on Tomlinson, told me the ruse was successful once again. Watson, though used to it, was only slightly less surprised.

"Tomlinson has some information that I thought you might like to hear," said Watson.

"I'd be very much interested in what he may add," I said, "but first I should like to bring you up to date on my own deliberations."

I was afraid that Tomlinson, as chief investigator, may have come to the same conclusions as I. I enjoyed center stage and did not wish to share it. It is a vanity I recognize but of which I am not proud.

"Well," said Watson, "it would seem you've had little rest since I left. What have you come up with?" Watson and Tomlinson exchanged glances of resignation.

"I think I've got most of the pieces put right," I began, "perhaps Tomlinson here can fill in the details. First, as I've already explained, it wasn't Mrs. Molle', that was the target that day. It was Henry Molle'."

"I've conceded that," interrupted Watson. "but why?"

"The inheritance my good man." I continued. "Think about the ascendancy to the estate. You need go no further than three. Mrs. Molle' inherited from her father who specifically in his will bypassed his son John. Your notes make no mention of it, but I assume he was as surprised as Mary. Mrs. Molle's direct beneficiary would have been her husband, Henry. Unless of course she left other instructions, but if she had it is doubtful they would have been known to any but her solicitors. Now Watson, in the absence of any probate from Mary, if John MacCann wished to insure his inheritance, should anything happened to his sister, what was the only impediment?"

"Henry Molle'," answered Watson.

"Precisely. Henry Molle' must be eliminated before Mary. Which brings us to Andrew MacCauley and the altered shell. I would guess MacCauley was acting as John MacCann's agent in this business, but the plan went awry when the shotguns were exchanged, something that could not be foreseen. I can imagine the panic that ensued when events unfolded as they did. John MacCann must have imagined his inheritance lost forever, but then it seemed he struck lucky. Henry Molle' was so completely devastated by his wife's tragic death that he suffered a complete alienation. MacCann made the most of it. How he came to be appointed conservator of the estate I have yet to determine, but no mind, it's of no great importance."

"Perhaps I can help with that," said Tomlinson. "You've got it right enough save one important detail. You're not the only one that can use the bluff." He continued, directing that last comment at me, in what I hoped was a jovial manner, though I couldn't be sure.

"But let me start at the beginning, if I may," continued Tomlinson

"MacCann came to Dewers, Cheevers & Howe some three months ago. He acquainted the partners with the facts of the case and sought their help in declaring his sister's marriage null & void. He was advised that grounds for such annulment did not seem to exist. He offered Molle's dementia but it

was pointed out that didn't arise until sometime after the marriage. It was then he charged Molle' with his sisters murder. He offered no proof save a promise of testimony from Andrew MacCauley that would implicate Molle'."

"The partners from the start had suspicions about MacCann and his story. I was assigned the case and quietly began an investigation. What I found was most interesting. The MacCann Transport Company is heavily in debt, indeed so much so that the conservators have mortgaged Glen Burnie to satisfy creditors. In the seven years John MacCann has controlled the company he has managed to take it to the brink of collapse. He was able to accomplish this by gaining control of the five-member board of governors. The MacCann name carried some weight and he used it to control the appointments and dismissals of the board. In short time all five members came to be MacCann cronies. Once that was accomplished they had free reign."

"I was able to uncover, with little effort I might add, a life of debauchery and gaming by MacCann and his mates. It was a life unsupportable on their reported compensation from MacCann Transport. At the beginning they were cautious and went to some trouble to conceal their identities on these sprees but as time passed without challenge, they grew bolder. Their escapades are now common knowledge in that locale and they enjoy some celebrity among the townsfolk. It seems inconceivable to them that John MacCann could be guilty of what they attributed so quickly to Henry Molle', and with far less reason. The officials in the district likewise have short memories, or deep pockets. None of this overt activity seemed cause for concern. I was convinced there was some bribery about and that, as you well know, is reason to suspect treachery. That's when I called on Dr. Watson and solicited his help. I was aware of his association with both you and Molle' and hoped we, together, could put an end to the Molle' tragedy."

"And so we have." I said. "I'm sure we can give the authorities more than enough reason to go after MacCann and MacCauley."

"It's already been done," said Watson.

"How's that?" I asked.

"I've been providing Tomlinson with your deductions these past few days," replied Watson, "and he has been forwarding them to the Yard. They've had MacCann and MacCauley under suspicion since the beginning but could find no evidence to implicate them. Based on his investigations they've been questioning them but with little success. They held to their stories until confronted with your name and your nitrocellulose theory, and then John MacCann began to crack. A bluff or two by the inspectors, they too follow your adventures, and their scheme crumbled."

Tomlinson took up the tale. "They're each blaming the other now, while admitting to small transgressions, it won't be long before the Yard has it all signed, sealed and recorded. The Inspectors have a good idea as to how it will end. It looks as if MacCauley was the one to start this business, the young MacCann being drawn into it. When John MacCann fell from favor with his father and was cut off from the benefits of the MacCann fortune, MacCauley lost access to it as well. He was a frequent visitor to Glen Burnie, a drone if you will, abusing MacCann hospitality quite flagrantly. I've interviewed a few of his pub mates and he made no secret of his anger toward Angus MacCann about this loss. They described MacCauley an opportunist without morals. Angus MacCann considered him ne'er-do-well and a horrendous influence on his son. He was surely correct on that point, since my investigation reveals a much different John MacCann before he fell in with MacCauley."

All this seemed vaguely familiar, *deja vu* again. Some other case I thought, but again none came readily to mind. I felt compelled to agree with Tomlinson, lest they think me slack in my detective work.

"I thought as much." I said, trying to sound as confident as possible, though at that moment I'd never felt so inadequate. How could I have missed all this? The clues were there; they came flooding back as Tomlinson talked. Where had I heard this before? In Watson's portfolio perhaps. I should have picked up on this but didn't. All I could do now was listen as Tomlinson unfolded the mystery layer by layer.

"Please go on." I said as graciously as I could manage. There was nothing I could add to Tomlinson's deductions and not wishing to appear the fool, I gave up all pretexts of trying. I allowed Tomlinson to continue, uninterrupted. He had my complete attention now.

"The elder MacCann banned MacCauley from Glen Burnie" Tomlinson continued. "And he and John had harsh words about it according to Angus MacCann's secretary, Robert Edwards. The outcome was John leaving for America. Edwards related it was Angus MacCann's idea to pack John off to the States. He thought to get him far as far from MacCauley as possible. According to Edwards, John left with letters of introduction addressed to business contacts that might prove useful. He was also provided a monthly stipend, handled through a New York bank. The only alternative his father offered was a poor choice indeed, his allowance would be eliminated and he would get no help from his father in seeking employment. John knew he was in an untenable position, he could hardly hope to support himself at cards. Reluctantly, John agreed."

I tried to imagine, as I sometimes do when trying to solve a case, what young MacCann was thinking when he left for America. Revenge? Doubtful. Defeat? Possibly. Most probably he felt wronged, as most spoiled and indulged offspring do when finally confronted. Unfortunately Angus MacCann waited too long to bring his son to task.

"With John MacCann gone, MacCauley was left to his own devices. He had no ready source of income, save what he could crop at the gaming tables and betting parlors. He bragged he'd not yet finished with the MacCann fortune. 'They've plenty enough, they won't miss a wee bit more, '...and I'm the one knows how to get It.' he was quoted as saying. He hinted that he just might threaten to follow John to the States to see how much that would be worth. The Yard is confident now they have witnesses that will put MacCauley on the train with Angus MacCann the night he was killed. The descriptions provided match, all that's needed is a face-to-face confrontation. They believe him to be the dining companion that night and one can only imagine that dinner conversation. Whether MacCann slipped or was thrown will probably never be known, MacCauley may have had nothing to do with it. No matter, he has but one neck to give Her Majesty's court and that will be for Mary Molle'."

All this was more than I was ready to accept. Tomlinson had indeed filled in some small blanks in my hypothesis but had created gaping holes while doing so. I had more than a few questions but was reluctant to ask them. At this point in a case I am accustomed to answering questions, not asking them. This was a most unfamiliar position and not to my liking. Anxiety gnawed at my stomach and my head

began to pound. The exhilaration I experienced a short time before evaporated as I struggled with myself. Should I ask the questions and admit defeat or continue the bluff, hoping Tomlinson or Watson would provide me the answers. I decided to bluff again. It seldom failed me.

This time it did. Tomlinson had obviously finished his narrative and Watson, to my dismay, did not take up the story. Instead he said.

"Well Holmes, have we missed anything?"

I was taken aback at this, unprepared.

"No. I think that's all there is to be told." I replied, but then I heard myself saying "What about John MacCann?"

I was annoyed at myself. I had let curiosity get the better of me. I sought to cover my mistake and quickly added, "Is it Scotland Yard's charge that he conspired to murder his father?"

I hoped my tone ambiguous enough to hide my ignorance.

"No," said Tomlinson cautiously, "that's the one detail you've got wrong. It looks as if it was MacCauley's initiative to confront Angus MacCann on the train and start this business. We don't know yet if it was a chance meeting or planned, though MacCauley would have little reason to be on the continent. I doubt whether John MacCann knew the meeting took place until the Inspectors informed him. That knowledge no doubt contributed to his willingness to talk. MacCann claims he knew nothing of MacCauley's treachery until two years ago and that is most likely true. It looks now as if MacCauley's plan was to eliminate Henry Molle' first then Mary. You were on the track with that Mr. Holmes. That would have put John MacCann in position to inherit. No doubt MacCauley had a similar fate planned for John MacCann."

I took small comfort knowing MacCauley was the villain here and John MacCann a victim as much as his sister and father. I didn't know why I felt compassion for John MacCann, likely it was natural to feel empathy toward another man lest by chance I find myself in similar circumstance. Or maybe his situation touched a memory or experience deep within me. I did not know but had no time to reflect on this. Tomlinson continued.

"They had gone through the assets of MacCann Transport and MacCauley was pushing to sell off Glen Burnie to finance their lifestyle. John balked at this; apparently MacCauley at last went too far. John had no particular interest in MacCann Transport save that it provided his indulgences, but he considered Glen Burnie his home even though title now rested with Molle'. It was at this point MacCauley threatened to expose John's embezzlement to the Bank conservators. He hinted that he could make him suspect in his sister's death as well. John had no reason to believe this anything but an idle threat; he believed Mary's death a tragic accident. John had come to know MacCauley as a liar and cheat but did not think him capable of murder. How wrong he was."

During Tomlinson's narrative my head began to swirl with thoughts and images as I tried to mesh my conclusions with Tomlinson's findings. My thoughts became as a Zoetrope, with pictures flashing by, giving me just a glimpse though the slit. The spinning images were at first too fast and then too slow, giving incorrect sequence to the thought and making little sense. I tried to govern my thoughts, to slow down, then speed up, in order to make the illusion work. I wasn't so very far off the mark I thought, a few adjustments here and there and I would come out looking all right. I needed a conclusion, an end to the tale, before Tomlinson would finish it and spoil my reputation. What would Watson think if I failed him? I had used every ruse I could muster. I had nodded knowingly at revelations, raised eyebrows to encourage explanation, phrased questions ambiguously, tactics I had employed successfully for years; but now any such stall would have shouted my ignorance.

Then, suddenly, the swirling images and thoughts came together and I had the finish. Tomlinson had paused to reload his pipe and had not yet continued his story.

"That's it." I exclaimed, my voice startling Tomlinson and Watson, as well as myself. For a brief instant I saw it all, as a falling curtain reveals a statue. The outline was always there, only the details hidden. I saw it all clearly and was overwhelmed.

"What is it Holmes?" said Watson.

The room began to spin, my knees gave way and I felt myself falling. I tried to speak but could not find my voice. I heard Watson, "Easy, easy." His voice trailed away and all went black and quiet.

Chapter Five

Confrontation

A growing light, soft and surrounding began to chase the dark. I was reminded of mornings and dawn. I found myself outdoors, in a field with a woman who, somehow I knew, was Mary MacCann. Just as unfathomable I believed she was my wife. I was Molle' and at the same time Holmes, watching from above. It is a technique I sometimes employ to gain insight on motive and behavior. It started as a pleasant dream, not unlike some I conjured to amuse myself, but the enjoyment was short-lived. I knew how this would end. "This is just a dream," I thought. "Watson's dilemma intruding again in my nightmares." But I could not escape the illusion. I kept telling myself it was a fantasy but I could not stop it. It plodded on, in predictable scenes, heading towards its terrible conclusion. Each scene played out and when I tried to direct its course it would begin again. Finally, in surrender, I allowed it to play without intervention and the vision moved on. This continued, scene after scene, frustration and terror building, until the last final vision. At the sound of the explosion I was jolted awake. I sprang upright on the couch and found myself facing my archenemy, Moriarity.

The familiar assault began immediately.

"What is your name?"

"I uh . . . it is . . . "

What did he want? If the answers were important to Moriarity then I must keep the truth from him. I thought to deceive him but I could not think fast enough. He always knew when I lied. It seemed he already knew all the answers. What then did he want from me, confirmation? My mind was running at half speed and the questions came at double time. My answers always seemed to be two questions behind.

"Were you named for your father?"

"...it . . . I . . . "

"You are not who you say you are. Are you?"

"My name is . . . "

"Do you know why you are here?"

"You know my name. It is . . . "

"What? What is it? The truth now."

"I don't know."

"Don't know what? Your name or why you are here?"

"I...I'm confused."

"Exactly. See, you do know something."

It went on like this, over and over. Moriarity speaking in riddles and I stammering drivel and jaberwocky. I must still be dreaming I reasoned.

My head was spinning and my body limp. It would seem, were it not for the couch, I would have melted to the floor. I wanted his probing to cease, but he would not relent. I thought to agree with him, hoping to satisfy him that I might have peace. What did he want me to say? I'll say it. Just go away and leave me be. No I am not who I say I am. Yes, it has all been a deceit. What is my name? You know it Professor.

"Yes I know it, and you know it too."

"Then there is no problem."

"Ah but there is you see. I must be sure . . . "

I was so broken down under his attack that I was beginning to doubt my identity. I tried to think of my childhood, of my father and mother. I wanted to see their faces. I wanted to recall the house where I was born and raised. I wanted to remember the village and the school and the church. Before I could form a clear picture in my head the pummeling questions resumed. I closed my eyes against the light and tried not to hear him. I concentrated with all the effort my feeble brain could muster. A dream within a dream, within a nightmare.

The village of my childhood slowly formed in my thoughts, the path over the bridge leading to our house was before me. I saw the silhouette of my father in the field, the sun at his back. He took off his hat and waved it at me like a flag. I waved back and ran on up the path to the house. Inside was warm

and familiar. Through the kitchen window, out in the small garden, I could just make out the top of my mother's sunbonnet as she bent amongst the beanpoles.

"What are you thinking? Answer me?" Moriarity's badgering invaded my memories.

"Are you afraid to answer? Are you afraid to remember?" Moriarity shouted.

The questions were repeated endlessly. They seemed designed for specific answers and I thought, "He shall have them. If that's what it takes for peace and quiet, he shall have them." When I began to proffer answers that Moriarity wanted, the pace of the questions seemed to slow. I was able to think but I didn't get the peace I expected.

"Remember. Think." commanded Moriarity

What is he up to? What evil is he planning? I must discover his motive. I must foil him. He must not succeed. This was Moriarity, a man without conscience.

I found myself thinking of my mother. I saw her shelling peas outside the kitchen. I remember her singing as she opened the pods. Her voice was soft and gentle. I remember wanting to help but she wouldn't let me. "Mustn't do that . . . sharp. You'll get hurt."

My thoughts turned to my father, I remembered looking up at him as he came into the house. His head seemed so far above me I could not make out his features. I imagined I heard him again. "And what have you been about today, spiders and toads no doubt." Then he would lift me to his shoulders and take me down to the pump while he washed up. I would wash up with him, mimicking his every move as he bent over the tub, silhouetted against the setting sun.

"What are you thinking?" Moriarity's voice intruded, but I ignored him. I was in another place, another time and did not wish to leave.

I hadn't thought about my parents in such a long time. Why not? I wondered. Such pleasant memories. My thoughts raced through my childhood. Moriarity kept talking, asking, probing, but I scarcely heard him. His tone seemed less harsh and threatening and I was able to ignore him. I was back in the house of my childhood. I did not want to leave. Moriarity's voice kept intruding, a word, a phrase, would sometimes penetrate into my thoughts.

Visions of long ago were playing out in my head. A blurred panorama. It was my house, my village, I knew that, but nothing was clear. It was as if I were watching through a morning mist in bright sunshine, the kind that is sometimes slow to burn off. It was my mother, it was my father, that I saw, but I could not imagine their faces clearly. Something always obscured their faces. The sun behind my father blinded me. My mother's sunbonnet cast a dark shadow across her face.

"It's time to . . . "

Why could I not picture them? I tried to remember. When did I last see them? Where were they? Then I remembered, how silly of me, they were gone, many years ago.

"...can get . . . him."

The scene shifted to a candle lit table in a quiet Italian hotel dining room. Molle', his face in the shadows and Mary her face glowing in the flickering flame. I saw her face clearly though we'd never met. The portfolio, there must have been a photograph. I felt an instant of exhilaration followed by an intense sadness. I knew she was doomed. I could hear Molle', laughing at her every word, and thought of the loss he would suffer. I imagined two people alone. Molle', serious, frail and recovering from exhaustion and Mary, full of life and on the Grande Tour. A gift from her father before she would settle down with a suitable husband. Molle' must have found Mary irresistible. Two people, so unlike and far from home, finding each other and falling in love. How could they not? It was Rome, the City of Love. I began to understand Molle's escape into fantasy. The truth was unbearable.

How did I know all this? Again the portfolio came to mind, and with it Watson and his problem. I was once again at the scene of the tragedy, though it had the same blurred quality of my childhood memories. A man and woman in a fog drenched field.

"...Molle' . . . what are . . . going to do? We . . . much time."

The sound of an explosion and the women falls. Molle', his eyes closed in terror is screaming. The sound of a wagon, shouts.

"Hurry, for gods sake. Get her into the wagon. Send for the Doctor"

"We have got to . . . "

The fog is beginning to lift, things are getting clearer. There are many wagons and carriages in the drive. There is crying. There is Henry Molle'.

"I say, did you hear me? We must get about it if we're to stand a chance."

It was Watson waking me. I sat up on the couch.

Sunlight streamed through the window. Had I slept and dreamt through the night? Was it all some horrible nightmare? Deliberately, cautiously, I probed my consciousness. It all began to come back. Memories flooded my brain, pleasant at first, like the daydreams I often amused myself with. This seemed just one of them. I knew though, deep inside, that it wasn't. It would soon become unpleasant again and I would have to face my nightmares. Perhaps because the memories were still vague and dreamlike I was able to ponder them.

Watson said nothing as I struggled with my thoughts but I detected an uneasiness.

"I will be all right." I said in the most confident voice I could gather. "How long have I been... here?" I continued.

"Its just past eight." said Watson.

"No. I mean how long have I been here, in this place?"

Chapter Six

The Resolution

Almost seven years living a dream. It seemed so real. Watson, Mrs. Hudson, Moriarity, Lestrade, all real people but not at all who I imagined them to be. Watson began to explain, slowly at first until I began to accept what had happened to me. Watson's explanation began with the Beechum Asylum.

It was established by John Beechum in gratitude for the successful treatment of his only daughter, brought back from the deepest of dementia. Beechum's fortune was gained in chinaware and pottery and the Asylum is what used to be the factory and houses of his workers. A new facility, closer to the docks allowed Beechum to donate the old property. It comprised a solid block of London with the

factory building in the middle surrounded by streets with the familiar flats of houses. The last ring of houses, facing inward, forms a wall with few portals, and these are gated and locked. Just as it effectively controlled entrance and exit to the factory, this design was ideal for a sanitarium dealing with patients suffering from nervous indisposition. It is felt that patients will benefit from the nearly normal conditions this arrangement affords. Most patients are allowed some free reign of the streets of the facility. Watson recalled his first visit to Beechum's, walking through what looked like normal London streets. The activity on the cobbles, people going about, appeared perfectly normal. He was told most of these on the streets were indeed patients on the mend. There were others, kept under lock in the main building, the old factory, not yet ready for the streets.

Watson continued with explanations and I had many questions. Most he answered readily but some he deferred, cautioning me to go slowly. "All in due course Sir, all in due course," he said. Watson was first, my doctor, though in the last two years I sensed our relationship and gone beyond that. I considered him my most trusted friend and confidant but I wasn't sure just then if Watson considered me friend or patient. I was afraid to ask but I had to know the answer.

"I am not sure how to address you." I said warily. "I've been calling you Watson for what seems like forever. Now I . . ."

He put up his hand and cut me off. "I would be offended if you called me anything else." He said. "We've both been through a lot these last years and I received as good as I gave. The worst is over for you now, but I think you have some bad days before you. You won't be alone, I'll be with you, I've made arrangements, and financially we're in good stead, thanks to your adventures and my pen but no need to get into that now."

He was right. I was alone these last seven years. Alone with grief, guilt, and fear. He understood. I also understood I would never be alone again. As long as either of us lived I would benefit from his companionship and counsel. Watson was my friend.

I learned from Watson about the others who were so much a part of my life for the past seven years. Mrs. Hudson, assigned to me by the Asylum was not my landlady but in fact my nurse. Such as she had put up with me over the years I could only imagine since I was still rather murky and confused

but some memories were surfacing. Watson assured me she was used to it and I was no worse than others she had cared for, yet I dreaded when next we might meet. Whatever would I say to her?

Lestrade, whom I placed in Scotland Yard, was the Captain of the Guard at Beechum's. He must be a man of infinite patience to have listened silently as I exaggerated every trivial transgression that occurred into the most sensational crime. Missing rings and personal possessions became priceless stolen gems and rare antiques. Everyday cuts and scrapes on fellow patients became assaults, attempted robbery or assassination attempts. Every visitor was a suspected assassin, thug or spy. When familiar faces were no longer seen they must be murder victims rather than cured and released. Only I could solve these great mysteries, and solve them I did, with elaborate theatrics. Lestrade listened patiently to all my solutions and allowed my fantasy.

And finally there is Moriarity, my arch enemy. It was he who I found to be behind the most sinister plots. He opposed me at all times. He was constantly standing before me, blocking me, preventing me from going where I wanted to go and doing what I wanted to do. A man I described as the incarnation of all evil, a man without conscience, a man without compassion. A man who could look into my very soul. It was this I feared most, I know that now. Professor Moriarity knew my secrets, knew who I was, knew what I would not acknowledge. I believed he was out to destroy me and in a sense I was correct. He succeeded and I will be forever grateful. Holmes is dead, Molle' lives.

THE END