

**The
Bornholm
Diamond**

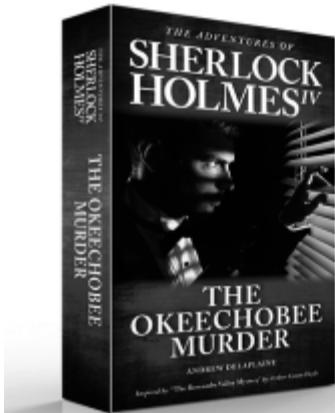
Inspired by “A Scandal in Bohemia”
by Arthur Conan Doyle

**The Adventures
of Sherlock Holmes IV**

Andrew Delaplaine

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In "The Okeechobee Murder," inspired by Conan Doyle's "The Bescombe Valley Mystery," Holmes and Watson are called to a remote area of Florida overlooking Lake Okeechobee to investigate a murder where all the evidence points to the victim's son as the killer. Holmes, however, is not so sure.



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Author’s Note
Background Information on
The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes IV

Since this book is one in a series on the exploits of Sherlock Holmes IV, it might be useful to the Reader to know how he came to find himself in Miami and how he came to find himself associated with Watson and Lestrade.

Some of this backstory cannot be revealed at this moment because it is integral to developments that occur in books in the series yet to be written. This is how it is related in *The Red-haired Man*:

“I was just explaining to Mr. Janklow here that I emigrated from London to South Beach strictly because of Inspector Lestrade. It really was quite astonishing, Mr. Janklow. I was returning from a case in Ecuador, and I had to change planes here in Miami. I knew that Lestrade had come over from London years before when he married a Cuban woman, and since I was here for a couple of days, I decided to look him up.”

“That’s exactly right, Mr. Holmes,” said Lestrade with a thin-lipped smug grin.

“I’d never met the descendant of my ancestor’s colleague at Scotland Yard,” Holmes went on, “and I thought as the opportunity for me to return to Miami might not arise again, I ought to look him up.”

“And what does he do, Mr. Janklow?” Lestrade said, leaning forward for emphasis, “he goes and buys this hotel on Lincoln Road *and moves here!*”

“And even stranger, Mr. Janklow, two years after I opened Fleming House, John Watson comes here for a visit and ends up staying on as my general manager!”

"I'd read of course about the reunion of the descendants of Holmes and Lestrade," said Watson, "and when I had a one-week holiday, thought I'd come over to meet them both."

"And when he got here," Holmes took over the narrative, "it turned out that he was a top manager at the Connaught. I was having the devil of a time managing Fleming House, so I offered him a berth here and that pretty much brings us up to date."

And that, dear Reader, as far as it goes, brings you up to date as well.

Chapter 1

The “Viking” Courier

As he entered the ground floor of the Fleming House after returning from a series of errands over in Miami, Watson saw a worried look on the face of Rafael Garcia, their head man at reception. This look was familiar to him, and could mean only one thing: the master was ill at ease about some pressing issue.

“What’s got into him now, Rafael?”

“Hell if I know, Mr. Watson. He got a letter a couple of hours ago by special courier—a guy that looked like some kind of tough guy Viking—and after reading it here in the lobby, he stormed up to his apartment and told me not to put through any calls.”

“Oh, it’s just another case, Rafael,” Watson sighed. “You know how he gets when he gets an interesting case.”

“Yes, Mr. Watson. But he hasn’t had an interesting case in quite a while.”

“Then this case must be a fascinating one,” said Watson.

He dropped his parcels off with Rafael and moved over to the rickety though very grand lift that ever so slowly served the five floors of Fleming House.

Watson drew the brass grille aside and stepped into the lift, installed by the Otis Elevator Company the same year the Fleming House (then called the Esplanade Hotel) was built in 1926. It was never intended to be a grand hotel in any sense. With only a few floors, and four suites on each floor, it had very few units. It’s what is called a “boutique” hotel today. It did have a sort of retro charm and a faintly “Caribbean Colonial” ambience, with the louvred doors, potted palms in every corner, old Hunter ceiling fans whirring away day and night, smoke emanating from the Goldeneye Bar late at night, lots of dark shadows where people met. There hadn’t been an “esplanade” back in the ’20s, either, and there certainly wasn’t one now.

The lift drew to a bouncy stop at the fifth floor, and opened into a small foyer shared by the suites on that floor. The front half of the building overlooking Lincoln Road was taken up with Holmes's apartment. The back half was divided into two suites.

When he acquired the property, Holmes had taken the two suites in the front of the building and combined them into his apartment. (The other floors had the four-suite layout.)

As he entered the Holmes's suite, he made sure to let Holmes know he was coming, but before he could say a word, he heard Holmes speak.

"I've been waiting for you, damn it! Where the hell have you been?"

Watson walked in and saw Sherlock Holmes IV pacing back and forth like a lion, angry that his cage was so small.

"I've been over in Miami running errands. You know perfectly well where I've been. I told you before I left."

Sherlock Holmes IV stopped in his tracks and turned to face Watson, bringing his hands from behind his back and resting them on his hips akimbo.

"Well, you certainly enjoyed yourself, I can see that."

"I was at Home Depot in bloody Little Havana. What's so enjoyable about that?"

"Because you put the top down on your car so you could get some sun, which caused you to dawdle while enjoying the air."

"How do you know that?"

A drawn out sigh emblematic of Holmes's tedium escaped his finely sculpted lips, one of his fairest features.

"Because your hair is mussed and you've taken on a little color. You wore a baseball cap to shield your eyes, because, as you know, at this time of day, the sun would have been shining into your eyes as you went down I-95."

"Well, I did have the top down, yes," Watson agreed.

"But did you have to take the Venetian Causeway? It would have been much quicker if you'd taken the MacArthur Causeway instead."

Now it was Watson's turn to be exasperated.

"The Venetian comes out at Seventeenth Street, much closer to Lincoln Road than the MacArthur, which as you very well know lands at Fifth Street," said a visibly perturbed Watson.

"It's not much quicker if you catch the drawbridge on the Venetian, which you did."

"How do you know?"

Holmes lit a cigarette and tossed the match into a cut glass ashtray on the bar as he walked out onto the terrace overlooking the pedestrians strolling along Lincoln Road below. Watson followed him out.

"It is simplicity itself, Watson," he said, eyes sparkling. "If you'll observe the faint chalky substance on both your elbows, you would deduce, as I have, that you got stopped on the Venetian by a drawbridge. In the five and a half to six minutes it normally takes for the drawbridge to rise, let the sailboats pass, and lower, you got out of your car and went to lean over the white railings to watch the boats pass. These white railings commonly leave a little white residue on skin or fabric."

"Holmes, this is too much. You'd have been burned for witchcraft, had you lived a few centuries ago."

"In that you are doubtless correct."

Watson, conceding defeat, laughed at the ease with which he explained his process of deduction. "When I hear your reasons, they always appear so ridiculously simple that I could easily do it myself. But with every new instance I'm baffled until you explain your process. And yet I'm sure my eyes are as good as yours."

"Quite so," he answered, smoking his cigarette and throwing himself down into an armchair. "You *see*, but you do not *observe*. The distinction is clear. For example, when our sad little lift is not working, you have frequently been forced to use the stairs leading down around the elevator shaft, yes?"

"Yes, frequently."

"How often?"

“Well, hundreds of times.”

“Then how many steps are there between floors, one landing to another?”

“How many? I don’t know.”

“Quite so! You have not observed. And yet you have seen. That is just my point. Now, I know that there are seventeen steps, because I have both seen and observed.”

“It seems like Sherlock Holmes knows everything!”

His handsome head tilted for a moment, and he smiled.

“Well, nearly. By the way, since you are interested in my little challenges, you may be interested in this.”

Holmes walked over to the fireplace that still worked (it was used in January and February, but very rarely any other time) and plucked a thick cream-colored paper from the mantelpiece above it, tossing it over to Watson.

“Read it aloud.”

The note was undated, and without either signature or address.

“Tonight at 7:45, a gentleman will wait for you at Doraku, a Japanese restaurant at the west end of Lincoln Road. He will be in the booth farthest to the rear of the restaurant. He desires to consult you upon a matter of the utmost importance. Your recent services to one of the royal houses of Europe have shown that you are one who may safely be trusted with matters of great consequence. This account of you we have from all quarters received. Though it will be dark at Doraku, he will wear sunglasses.”

“This is quite a cloak-and-dagger affair,” said Watson.

“He was obviously impressed with that business I was involved in having to do with ascertaining the parentage of Prince Harry.”

“Well, you singlehandedly scuttled the rumors about Diana’s riding master being Harry’s father.”

“Though Harry does look quite a bit like Hewitt.”

“Earning the undying gratitude of the Royal Family.”

"Yes, which we see has translated into new business!"

"What do you think this letter is about?"

"It's obviously something so important he didn't want to call. Or even text. Such things as phone calls and text messages can be monitored by almost anybody. And I have no data yet. It is a capital mistake to theorize before you have data. Without reason, you begin to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts. But the note itself. What do you deduce from it?"

Watson carefully examined the writing, as well as the paper.

"The man who wrote it was presumably well to do," said Watson, trying to imitate Holmes's processes. "You can only get paper like this from the best stationers. I've seen a couple of letters from Buckingham Palace and the White House, and they're like this: richly strong and stiff."

"Rich, indeed. It's not even English paper at all. Or American. Hold it up to the light."

Watson did, and saw a large "V" with a small "b," a "P," and a large "F" with a small "t" woven into the texture of the paper.

"What do you make of that?" asked Holmes.

"The name of the maker, no doubt; or his monogram, rather."

"Not at all. The 'F' with the small 't' stands for 'Företaget,' which is the Swedish for 'Company.' It is a customary contraction like our 'Co.' 'P,' of course, stands for 'Papper.' Now for the 'Vb.' Let us glance at the Universal Abbreviation System."

He took out his cell phone and connected to the Internet.

"Let's see. Yes, 'Vb,' stands for Visby, a town not far from Darlana, in Sweden. Known for its numerous glass factories and paper mills.' Ha, ha, my boy, what do you make of that?"

His eyes sparkled, as they often did when he triumphed, and he sent up a great blue triumphant cloud from his cigarette.

"The paper was made in Sweden," said Watson.

"Precisely. And the man who wrote the note is a Swede. Do you note the peculiar construction of the sentence—"This account of you we have

from all quarters received.’ A Frenchman or Russian never would’ve written that. It’s the Swede who is so hard on his verbs. It only remains to be seen what this Swede who wears sunglasses at night wants from us.”

“*Us?*”

“I may need you to help me with this one, Watson.”

“Well, if you’re sure.”

“Watson,” he said, giving Watson *that* look.

“Of course. Silly me. You’re always sure. I’ll just go change—and wash my elbows,” said Watson.

He hurried out of the penthouse and, looking at the lift, grabbed hold of the delicately curved ornate Art Deco ironwork that formed the banister, and took the stairs that circled round the glass-walled shaft.

Holmes, of course, was right.

Seventeen steps between each landing.

Chapter 2

Fleming House

When he reached the ground floor, Watson went over to Reception. It was now 6 P.M. Rafael had left for his dinner break, replaced by the sultry Emilia Suarez, a proud Argentine with flashing eyes and a winning smile. All scheduled arrivals had checked in. Everything was in order.

Watson went into the Goldeneye Bar, which was just now filling up with the happy hour crowd. He sat at the burnished mahogany bar, dark and lustrous in the cool dim light.

Two bartenders were on duty at happy hour: Javier, the head barman, a handsome dark-haired guy from Montevideo about thirty years old, and Leira, a sexy girl in her mid-twenties from Guatemala. Leira was busy making drinks for a waitress at the service area at the far end of the bar. Both were part-time models, typical on South Beach.

Watson perched on one of the backless rattan stools at the end of the bar closest to the lobby next to one of their regulars, Bertie Madden, a writer for the local weekly gossip rag who fancied himself a journalist. Holmes had once joked, “Bertie isn’t a ‘journalist’—he’s an ‘alcoholist.’”

“Hiya doin’, John?”

“Just fine, Bertie, just fine.”

“What’s new?”

“Not much. Just put the paper to bed. I was running late with my copy so they had to hold the presses.”

“Naturally—what’s the news up at City Hall?”

“Same old corruption. I’ll weed it out, though, nail ’em to the cross!”

Watson nodded and Javier pulled out a chilled glass and drew a half pint of Smithwick’s, which he brought down to Watson’s end of the bar.

“Everything cool, Javier,” Watson asked.

“Yep,” Javier winked. “Everything’s cool.”

Watson took a long swallow from his glass as he got up and moved over to the doorway giving onto the lobby. Across from the bar was the

award-winning restaurant in Fleming House, the Crown Colony. The tables were covered with white tablecloths, that thick nickel-plated flatware you find in really good hotels shining at every place setting, a heavy glass bud vase on every table. The chairs were all polished mahogany, heavy and substantial, with floral designs on the seat covers. Though situated in an Art Deco hotel built in the 1920s, the Crown Colony had the feel of a late Victorian dining room, albeit one adapted for the Tropics. French doors led out to Lincoln Road in the front, and also onto Jefferson Avenue to the west, giving the room an open, airy quality.

The tables spilled out of the room opposite the bar and into the lobby, reaching back about halfway till they merged into the inner lobby where leather couches and chairs formed intimate seating arrangements. Again, more potted palms strategically placed between the clusters of chairs and sofas created a quiet, secluded atmosphere.

Opposite the inner lobby, directly next to the Goldeneye, was Reception. Further back, in the center of the ground floor stood the old elevator cab with its shiny grille, always humming as it churned its way up and down. The lift originally had required an operator, but this lift, while still the original cab, had been converted to a self-operated system in the 1950s.

Chapter 3

The Man in Dark Glasses

After freshening up in his rooms (he occupied a suite directly behind Holmes's), Waton went back down into the bar to wait for Holmes.

Javier came over.

"Mr. Holmes left word for you to meet him at Nespresso."

"Thanks, Javier," Waton said.

"Why can't he get coffee at his own place?" Madden jumped in.
"Cheaper than that fancy place up the Road. A cup of coffee is five bucks."

"Probably wants to do some people watching."

"That's one thing Holmes is good at, I'll say that: people watching," Madden said, raising a glass of Johnny Walker Black to his lips. "Or, more like it, *watching people*," he grunted as he laughed, the fat man's three chins rippling as his body shook heavily with the laugh. "That man sees things nobody else sees."

"This is true," said Waton, giving Madden a clap on the back before heading out into the lobby and out the front door. He came upon Lupe, one of the hosts at the Crown Colony, holding forth at the little maître d' stand out under the wide awning that jutted out over the sidewalk. It was the widest awning along Lincoln Road. Holmes was adamant than an awning "give proper shade." He was not a fan of those decorative awnings that did not shield people from rain or sun.

"He left a little while ago," said Lupe.

"Yeah, I know. Be back soon. Text me if you need anything, but I'll be busy for a couple of hours."

"OK."

He walked briskly west along the south side of Lincoln Road. It was only 7:15, so there was plenty of time before the Mystery Man appeared at Doraku.

It was a quiet night in July, and a stronger than normal breeze came in from the east, lightening Watson's mood. He walked past one restaurant after another, most of them pathetic tourist traps with terrible food and even worse service. He crossed over to the north side of Lincoln Road as he passed Meridian Avenue, went past the candy store on the corner and in less than a minute crossed Lenox Avenue and walked up to an outside table in front of Nespresso where he saw Holmes sitting by himself drinking an espresso.

"Why so early?" he asked, sitting down.

"Thought I'd like to see our man arrive, Watson, that's all."

A server with a pouty lower lip and sullen attitude came up and Watson ordered an espresso.

"You'll be sailing along in rare form with all this caffeine."

"I love my coffee, Watson."

A few minutes later, just as the waiter left their coffees, Holmes spoke.

"Ah, now see here, Watson," Holmes said, shifting his eyes over Watson's shoulder.

Watson turned around to see a black long wheel base Bentley Mulsanne pull up and stop on Lenox Avenue just where it crossed Lincoln Road. Yes, it was a limousine, but there was a difference. This one had not only a driver, but also, in the passenger's seat, a liveried servant, who quickly got out as soon as the car stopped to open the back door.

Holmes whistled.

"There's money in this case, Watson, if there's nothing else. That car's worth an easy \$400,000."

"You're sure you want me here?"

"Of course. This promises to be interesting. It would be a pity to miss it."

A tall man (he must have been six feet six inches) emerged from the Bentley and strode toward Doraku, which was directly across the Road from where Holmes and Watson sat at Nespresso.

He had the chest and limbs of a Hercules. He wore a dark blue blazer made of a rich material, probably silk, but they couldn't tell from this distance. Brass buttons. White duck pants, Gucci slip-ons, a Panama hat.

And yes, he wore dark glasses, though the sun had set thirty minutes ago.

The big man leaned over to speak to the maître d', who led him into the restaurant.

Watson looked over to Holmes, who was leaning back in his chair stretching his hands behind his neck. Holmes had a long lean frame. He was about five feet eleven, and weighed about 170 pounds. Despite his dissolute habits, which included too much drink, too many drugs and too little exercise, he was exceptionally strong. His hair was a nondescript brown which he brushed straight back over his head. His eyes, though set a little deep into his slightly heart-shaped face, sparkled with electricity and an undying curiosity and relentless inquisitiveness. A firm—some would say pointed—chin was nonetheless firm and resolute.

The server brought Watson's coffee.

"I'll have something different, waiter; this time a *caffè latte*," said Holmes.

"Don't you want to go over there?"

"He'll be fine. We don't want to appear too anxious, Watson. Or even worse, too inquisitive. He doesn't even know if I'll show up. All he knows for sure is that I got his letter, as it was hand-delivered. But that's all he knows."

After Holmes leisurely finished his coffee, he pulled a few dollars from a pocket and dropped them on the table.

They got up and walked across the street. The maître d' immediately recognized them, as they were regulars at this fine (and somewhat trendy) Japanese restaurant.

"Good evening, Mr. Holmes."

"Good evening, Abigail," Holmes said to the fresh-scrubbed blonde with a few attractive freckles distinguishable on the tip of her nose.

"Two for the bar?"

"No. We're meeting someone."

"Tell me what they look like and—"

"It's no problem, Abigail," said Holmes. "I know where he's sitting."

Holmes swept past Abigail and Watson followed as he went down the aisle toward the sushi counter in the back of the room. The place was busy, except for the several booths in the rear. Their man was sitting with his very broad back to the room, still wearing his hat. Holmes walked down to the end of the booth and turned to face the man.

"I am Sherlock Holmes." He indicated Watson with a casual flick of his wrist. "This is my friend and colleague, John Watson, who occasionally assists me with my cases."

The man waved to the empty seat in the booth and they sat down, Watson going in first.

"And may I ask your name?" Holmes asked.

"I am Count von Carlquist, a Swedish nobleman. I have heard of your associate, Mr. Watson, and that he, like yourself, Mr. Holmes, is a man of great discretion."

"He's a little less discreet after three pints of Smithwick's," said Holmes.

"Excuse me?"

"Never mind. Please go on."

"If you'll assure me that he can be trusted with a matter of the most extreme importance, I will believe you. Otherwise, I would prefer to speak with you alone."

"You may say to Watson anything you would say to me."

The Count shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Then let me begin," he said, "by binding you both to absolute secrecy for two years; at the end of that time the matter will be of no importance. At the present time, however, the matter at hand could easily have an influence on European history, for good or bad."

"I promise," said Holmes.

"And I."

A waiter came over.

"Something to drink?"

Holmes saw the Count was drinking a glass of white wine.

"I'll have a glass of the white wine the gentleman is drinking—in fact, just bring a whole bottle. My friend here will have a large sake."

"Please excuse the dark glasses," continued the stranger after the waiter had left. "The important person who sent me wishes that I be unknown to you, and I actually admit that the title I just gave you is not really my own."

"I was aware of it," said Holmes dryly.

The "Count" seemed a little taken aback. For such a large man, with a chin and nose that gave him a definite air of authority, he twitched nervously.

"The circumstances are very delicate, and we have to take every possible precaution because if we don't, we might seriously compromise one of the reigning families of Europe. Speaking plainly, it concerns the royal family of Sweden."

"I was also aware of that," murmured Holmes, who had put his elbows on the table and brought his hands together in a prayer-like gesture, resting his chin on the tips of his fingers as he closed his eyes peacefully.

The "Count" glanced with some apparent surprise at the languid, mild-looking man who had most certainly been represented to him as the most incisive and energetic agent in the world. Holmes slowly reopened his eyes and looked impatiently at his broad-shouldered client.

"If Your Royal Highness would condescend to state your case," he remarked, "I would be better able to advise you."

Holmes drained his glass of wine and poured himself another glass.

The man almost jumped out of the booth with surprise. He ripped off his sunglasses and leaned forward, staring at Holmes. He also took off his Panama hat, revealing a healthy shock of fine blond hair and striking blue eyes. He was about twenty-five years old.

“You’re right!”

“Your Royal Highness had not even spoken before I knew you were
Filip Tobias Benedikt, Crown Prince of Sweden.”

Chapter 4

The Anxious Prince

The Prince fairly gasped.

So did Watson, drawing from Holmes that self-important heavy-lidded look he sometimes offered Watson when he gasped with surprise.

“But you can understand,” the Prince said, leaning back against the booth and taking a hesitant sip from his glass of wine, “that I’m not used to this sort of business. The matter is so delicate that I didn’t dare to entrust it to anyone else without fear of putting myself in a blackmail situation.”

“Of course,” said Holmes in what Watson thought was an uncharacteristically soothing tone of voice.

“That’s why I have come secretly from Stockholm to Miami to consult with you.”

“All right. So let’s consult.” Now Holmes’s eyes jumped with energy as he leaned forward over the table.

“Well, briefly, the facts are—”

Holmes interrupted as the waiter rushed by.

“Waiter! Stop! Bring another bottle of wine. Now, go ahead.”

“Three years ago, on a visit to L.A., I met Irene Adler.”

“Ah, the beautiful actress, yes,” said Holmes.

“She completely won me over. I fell madly in love with her.”

“A state of emotion you share with quite a few other men, Your Royal Highness.”

“I know she’s had many others. But I thought I was different. I am, after all—”

“One of the most eligible bachelors in the world,” Holmes interrupted. “Handsome, rich, and not of the minor nobility—a man who would be King, to quote from Kipling.”

“Yes, but none of that means anything to her, not really.”

“Did you write some letters you want to retrieve?”

“Well, yes. But how—?”

“Was there a secret marriage?”

“No.”

“No legal papers or certificates?”

“No.”

“Then I fail to follow Your Royal Highness. If this actress produces her letters for blackmailing or other purposes, how is she to prove they’re authentic?”

“There is the writing.”

“Forgery.”

“My private writing paper.”

“I’ve seen an example of that. It could be stolen.”

“My own seal.”

“Imitated.”

“Still, it’s more serious than the letters alone, Mr. Holmes.”

“You mean there’s more.”

“Much more.”

Holmes poured out some more wine and nodded to the waiter.

“More sake for my friend, if you please.” To His Royal Highness: “Go on.”

“When a Crown Prince marries, it has been a tradition for him to give to his wife the Bornholm Diamond.”

“Why, of course,” said Holmes. “It’s an old tradition.”

“The Bornholm Diamond was given to my ancestor, King Karl Gustav the Tenth, when he defeated King Frederick the Third of Denmark in 1658.”

Holmes interrupted.

“Let me explain to my friend Watson how great was your ancestor’s victory. You see, Watson, King Karl Gustav led his army across a frozen strait between Jutland and Zealand, completely surprising the Danish forces. The peace was signed later in the Treaty of Bornholm.”

“Thus the name of the diamond.”

There was a pause as Holmes slowly turned to face the Nordic prince.

"What, may I ask Your Royal Highness, could the Bornholm Diamond possibly have to do with Irene Adler? It's been speculated in the gossip press that you're shortly to be engaged to the Countess Christina Wisborg von Svealand."

"Yes."

"And Irene Adler?"

The Crown Prince lowered his voice as he leaned forward.

"She *has* the Bornholm Diamond."

A dead silence settled over the table as Holmes and Watson absorbed the devastating news.

"May I ask what you were thinking when you gave it to her? I'm assuming you gave it to her, that she did not somehow find a way to steal it."

"I gave it to her to prove that I loved her. To prove that I would find a way to change my father's demands that I marry Christina."

"As you well know, Your Royal Highness, you cannot marry without your father's approval."

"I know. But I thought I could persuade him to change his mind."

"How did you manage to get the Bornholm Diamond out of the Royal Treasury?"

"Well, you may or may not know that the Crown Jewels are stored in a vault in a chamber deep below Stockholm Palace. This is our official residence."

"The Royal Family's private residence of course being Drottningholm Palace," said Holmes in a manner that made Watson embarrassed that Holmes was just showing off.

"Yes. But five years ago, to break away from my family a bit—I was only nineteen at the time—I moved into a suite in the official residence. And I became quite friendly with the Keeper of the Jewels, who was father to a friend of mine in school."

"I see," said Holmes slowly.

"When I fell in love with that sexy witch, Irene Adler, I was determined to give her the Bornholm Diamond as proof that I was sincere in my plans to convince my father to let me marry her."

"Thus making this successful but not very good actress from Hillsdale, New Jersey, the next Queen of Sweden."

"Yes. So I had a very good copy of the Bornholm Diamond made, using three different layers of agents."

"So no one would know who wanted a copy of the diamond, much less for what purpose."

"Yes. Now armed with my phony diamond, I spent more and more time with my friend's father in the vault. I always made sure to have the diamond on me so I'd have it when the perfect moment arrived. I made sure I always sat next to the Bornholm Diamond display case and that he took it out for me to handle several times."

"And?"

"We were so often alone in the vault that it was just a matter of waiting for him to turn his back at the right time. When he did, I made the switch."

Now Holmes and Watson both leaned back and took in deep breaths. Both also took long drinks from their glasses.

"You have compromised yourself seriously," Holmes said flatly.

"I must present the Bornholm Diamond to Christina next week."

"It must be recovered," Holmes said definitely.

"We have tried and failed."

"Your Royal Highness must pay. It must be bought."

"She will not sell."

"Stolen, then."

"Five attempts have been made. Twice burglars in my pay ransacked her house. Once we diverted her luggage when she travelled. Twice she has been stopped crossing borders and everything searched. Nothing."

"No sign of it?"

"Absolutely none."

Holmes laughed. "It is quite a pretty little problem," he said.

"But a very serious one to me," returned His Royal Highness sharply.

"Very, indeed. And what does she propose to do with the Bornholm Diamond? She can't sell it. She can't wear it."

"She can ruin me. That's what she plans to do with the diamond."

"But how?"

"She threatens to hold a press conference on the day when our betrothal is announced officially in Stockholm. To tell the world what I promised her. And she will do it. I know she will do it. You do not know her, but she has a soul of steel. She has the face of the most beautiful woman in the world, but the mind of a prizefighter. Rather than let me marry another woman, she would destroy me. The minute my father and Christina discover what I have done, there would be a great scandal. There might even be a measure brought up in the Riksdag to pass me by for King in favor of my younger brother. And I am not about to be shunted aside for that imbecile."

"When is the official announcement of your engagement?"

"Next Monday."

Holmes's attitude became more businesslike.

"Well, it's Friday here on South Beach. That gives us two full days and part of another."

"The good thing is that Irene Adler is here on South Beach," said the Prince.

"Yes, so we won't have to travel."

"Yes, she's been here for a month, in that house on Star Island," Watson added.

"And expected to stay another month or so, from what they say in the gossip columns."

"You don't strike me as the kind of person who reads the gossip columns, Mr. Holmes," said the Prince.

Holmes smiled.

“Oh, no, Your Royal Highness, I am a *slave* to the gossip columns. I watch *Access Hollywood* every night, and keep up with all the trash talk. Just because I know about the Treaty of Bornholm in 1658 doesn’t mean I am not curious about Charlize Theron, Matt Damon, George Clooney and even the luscious Irene Adler.”

“You surprise me, Mr. Holmes.”

“That’s what I’m in business for, Your Royal Highness, to surprise people. Let’s see if I can surprise our dear Ms. Adler. I am assuming you will stay in South Beach until we conclude this affair?”

“Yes, I’ll be at the Raleigh under the name von Carlquist. I was afraid to book rooms in your hotel.”

“Probably wise. Now, as to my fee.”

“You have a blank check, Mr. Holmes.”

“Absolutely?”

“I’ll tell you I’d give one of the provinces in my kingdom to have that diamond back.”

“And for present expenses?”

The Prince reached into his blue blazer and pulled out a two-inch stack of bills secured by a rubber band.

“Here’s twenty thousand dollars. But you shall have every resource you need from me.”

Holmes scribbled a receipt on a page in the small Moleskine notebook he always carried, ripped it out and gave it to the Prince.

“Then we will bid you good night, Your Royal Highness. I will be in touch with you tomorrow to advise my progress.”

The Prince reached for his wallet to pay for the drinks, but Holmes pulled a \$100 note from the stack and held it up with a smile.

“Please. Allow me, sir.”

The Prince smiled, put on his Panama hat and sunglasses, got up and left Doraku.

Holmes turned to Watson.

"Plan on meeting me tomorrow around three, Watson. I may have developed a plan of attack by then, and I'll want to go over it with you."

Chapter 5

The Elusive Holmes

All the next day there was no sign of Holmes anywhere in the hotel. Watson went about his normal duties as General Manager, checking in every hour or so with Rafael on the front desk to see if he'd heard from the master.

Nothing.

Watson was in and out of the property all day, but whether he was at the bank making the daily deposit, or conferring with Mrs. Portillo about whatever housekeeping problems she was having, his mind kept returning to the Crown Prince and his delicate problem.

Watson was deeply interested in Holmes's current inquiry, and knew that he must share with his distinguished forebear Dr. John Watson (after whom Watson was obviously named) that limitless interest in the current Sherlock Holmes that his ancestor had shown in the Sherlock Holmes of his time.

The nature of this case and the exalted station of Holmes's client gave it a character all its own. Indeed, apart from the nature of the investigation which Watson's friend had on hand, there was something in his masterly grasp of a situation, and his keen, incisive reasoning, that made it a pleasure for him to study his system of work, and to follow the quick, subtle methods by which he disentangled the most inextricable mysteries. So accustomed was Watson to his invariable success that the very possibility of his failing had ceased to enter his mind.

It was nearly 4 P.M. when, standing behind Reception with Rafael, he saw a drunken-looking yardman with a drooping moustache stroll in through the front double doors of the hotel (they were always propped open wide, summer or winter). He wore ripped blue jeans, a grass and sweat stained shirt that had seen better days. Once he passed from the

sidewalk on Lincoln Road into the hotel, his manner, posture and attitude all seemed to change from one of a broken down, overworked gardener to a man suddenly taken with a zealous streak.

Accustomed as Watson was to his friend's amazing powers in the use of disguises, he had to look three times before he was certain that it was indeed Holmes.

Holmes rushed up to the Reception and slapped both hands palm down on the front desk.

"Holmes! What the—?"

"Not now. Come upstairs with me and I will explain. Rafael, have them send up a turkey club, extra mayo, chips not fries, and two cold Smithwick's."

"Yes, Mr. Holmes."

With that, he turned and bounded up the stairs with the energy of a twenty year-old. Watson followed, not quite as fast, and found him as he came into the suite emerging from his bathroom already changed into a dressing gown and drying his face with a hand towel.

"Do you want to guess where I've been all day?"

"I can't imagine. I suppose you've been watching the habits, and perhaps the house, of Irene Adler."

Holmes reached for the sides of his body and stretched.

"Oh, that's painful. I haven't used those muscles in years. Working for a landscaping business is no easy task, Watson," he said, moving to a chair and sitting down, stretching his legs out to relax.

"I'm sure," said Watson, taking a seat nearby.

"I left the hotel a little after eight o'clock this morning in the character of a gardener after verifying that our friends over at Rodriguez Landscaping have clients on Star Island. I was in luck. They were making a call on the house across the street and down one house from the one rented by Irene Adler."

"Carlos Rodriquez must have been surprised to see you turn up in that outfit," Watson said as a waiter, Nelia, a cute petite Cuban girl in

her first year at Miami-Dade University, came through the door pushing ahead of her a room service table laden with the food and beer Holmes had ordered.

“Right over here, Nelia,” said Holmes, who picked up the napkin on the table and snapped it open with a flourish.

Nelia left and Holmes dug into his food with a relish Watson hadn’t seen in ages. Holmes was always fastidious, when it pleased him to be so, but now he was so excited to relate the particulars of his experience that he actually talked with his mouth stuffed with food.

“Carlos has always been very helpful over the years, ever since I came over from England, and I know all of his men. So it was very easy to mix and mingle once we crossed through the guarded checkpoint onto Star Island and settled in to work at the house across the street from Irene Adler’s.”

“It’s the usual sort of big-house rental, I imagine,” said Watson.

“Yes. It’s too big for what they need. Too many bedrooms. Too many baths. Too much of everything. But she’s been there a while and seems to have settled in as if it were her real home.”

“Oh?”

“Yes. While ostensibly working with the Rodriguez crew, I was able to wander down to two other crews working different houses—Carlos took me down and introduced me to all of them—and got to know their schedules. So I know which crew is working which house on the entire street where Irene Adler’s house is situated.”

“Ah,” said Watson.

“I got to know more about the landscaping and gardening teams that work Star Island than even the security detail. And Carlos even introduced me to the fellows tending the garden and cutting the grass at the house right next door to Irene Adler’s.”

“And what of Irene Adler?” I asked.

“Oh, there’s not a man on the island that isn’t acutely aware that she’s there, no matter whether the man lives there in a palatial mansion, cuts

the grass or trims a hedge. She's been living a very quiet life, however, for a big star. She gets occasional visits from her Hollywood agents at UTA, but there's an interesting character who stops by once—sometimes twice—a day: one Jeffrey Norton, a one of those big-shot hedge fund managers from New York who have driven up the country house prices out in Greenwich to such an outlandish degree."

"Yes, we all know the type," Watson sighed. "They come to South Beach and throw their money around—"

"In a vain attempt to be 'cool,' as they say," interrupted Holmes.

"Yes."

"We've had enough of them here in this hotel, I dare say."

"Indeed," Watson agreed.

"In any case, according to the eyes on the street that see everything, this Norton fellow is not your typical besotted star-gazer."

"No?"

"No. He comes by at least once a day—even though he doesn't live here. He keeps a flat at the Continuum on South Pointe, but is always over on Star Island visiting Irene Adler."

"Really?"

"Yes. I was able, with Carlos walking me around and dressed as I was, to reconnoiter the area quite thoroughly so as to set my plans."

"But what about Norton?"

"Well, I couldn't very well make any plans without considering him as a major factor. I had my cell phone, so I was able to check immediately with all my contacts in New York. Jeffrey Norton seems to be a totally new factor in Irene Adler's life. To me, this was very ominous. What was their relationship? Why the repeated visits? Was she his client, his friend, or his lover? If the former, she had probably transferred the Bornholm Diamond to his safekeeping. If the latter, it was much less likely. On the issue of this question depended whether I should continue to focus my attention on Star Island, or turn my attention to Norton's condo in the Continuum. A delicate point, and it considerably widened the field of

my inquiry. I don't wish to bore you with these details, but I have to let you see my little difficulties, if you are to understand the situation."

"I am following you closely," Watson answered.

"You see, if she was Norton's lover, the last thing she would want him to see was the Bornholm Diamond. You of all people, Watson, know how I am fixated on trashy Hollywood gossip. The trashier the better."

"This is true. What was it you said just the other day about the Kardashian sisters?"

"That they ought to be awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. And they deserve it."

"What is it they award the Medal for, anyway. As a Brit, I'm not so sure."

"Why, Watson, it recognizes those individuals who have made 'an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors,' and that's a quote," Holmes said with his mouth full, brandishing a fork in Watson's direction as he ate some potato salad. "I think it's the bacon I love more than anything else," he added.

"How, may I ask, Sherlock, have the Kardashians contributed to the cultural affairs of the United States? I'm assuming they have not had a hand in national security."

Holmes leaned back and sighed.

"Oh, Watson, you'll never learn the fine art of irony, which is only a short remove from the harsher art of sarcasm. The Kardashians, my dear fellow, have proved that *anybody* can triumph in this lawless country, with no talent at all."

"Ah," said Watson.

"Well," said Holmes quickly. "Let me be more specific. One *must* have the talent to titillate."

"Now what about this Norton chap?"

"Yes, thank you, Watson. I do digress."

"I'd certainly call the Kardashians a digression."

"Indeed. I was still going over in my mind how to approach the situation while Carlos was talking to the gardener at the house next door when a pale blue Bentley Continental GTC pulled up. The top was down and it looked like it had just been driven off the showroom floor. A handsome man got out, and the gardener told me that this was Jeffrey Norton. I did not for a moment doubt it. He looked rich. He looked confident. He also looked like he was in a frantic hurry over something. Reach over the bar and bring me a Smithwick's, will you, Watson? Nelia only brought me one when I asked for two."

"What was happening?" Watson asked, his face flushed as he moved over behind the wet bar in the corner and got Holmes a bottle of Smithwick's and popped the cap.

"He was in the house about twenty minutes. I could see him through the window in what looked like a morning room on this side of the house. The window was open so I could hear their voices. Very animated. Couldn't make out exactly what they were saying, but something was afoot. Presently, he dashed out of the house and jumped into the Bentley and sped away."

"And what about her?"

"Ten minutes later a Central Cab pulled up and tooted the horn and Irene Adler ran out to get in it."

"Why would Irene Adler take a cab? She would have bodyguards and drivers on duty round the clock at her house."

"Precisely, Watson. By taking a cab alone with no bodyguard, it is plain that she didn't want any of her staff to know where she was going. Also, you have to remember the paparazzi know her car. Star Island has a guard gate, which affords the famous actress a good deal more privacy than she could expect to enjoy if she'd rented a house, say, on North Bay Road."

"True."

"The windows in the cab were open and I could hear her order the cabbie to turn on the air conditioning and roll up the windows, but be-

fore he did, I heard her say, ‘An extra twenty dollars if you get me to the Church by the Sea in fifteen minutes.’

“The Church by the Sea? That’s the one up in Bal Harbour.”

“Yes, Watson. Just to the east of Saks Fifth Avenue.”

“What did you do?”

“I turned to Carlos and gave him a hundred dollars and told him I needed one of his boys to drive me to Bal Harbour that very instant. In seconds, I was in a seriously distressed pick-up truck with Edgardo, and on our way. I actually had to force the fellow to slow down a bit, as the last thing I wanted was for a policeman to stop us before I could find out what was going on at Church by the Sea.”

“They were still there when you arrived?”

“Yes. Norton’s blue convertible was parked outside. Actually, up on the curb not even in the driveway properly, so rapidly had he pulled it up. In his haste, he’d even left the top down.”

“And Irene Adler?”

“I assume she’d paid the cab off and was inside with Norton. I took Edgardo’s cell phone number and told him to wait for me around the corner, that I’d call him as soon as I’d finished. Inside, there was not a soul except Norton and Adler and a clergyman in his cassock, who seemed to be arguing with them. They were all three standing in a knot in front of the altar. I lounged up the side aisle like any other idler who has dropped into a church. Suddenly, to my surprise, the three at the altar faced round to me, and Norton came running as hard as he could towards me.”

“Did you run?”

“No, he didn’t have any idea who I might be. I was still dressed like a common yardman. He grabs me by the arm and says, ‘Thank God, you’ll do. Come! Come!’”

“What did you say?”

“I demanded to know what he wanted.”

“And?”

"Come, man, come, only three minutes, or it won't be legal,' he says. I was half-dragged up to the altar, and before I knew where I was I found myself mumbling responses whispered in my ear, and vouching for things I knew nothing about, and generally assisting in the secure tying up of one Irene Adler, spinster, to Jeffrey Norton, bachelor. Or, I might add, billionaire bachelor. It was all done in an instant, and there was the man thanking me on the one side and the lady on the other, while the clergyman beamed down on me. It was the most preposterous position I ever found myself in in my whole life, and it was the thought of it that started me laughing just now. It seems there'd been some irregularity about their license, and the clergyman absolutely refused to marry them without a witness of some sort. My lucky appearance saved the bridegroom from having to sally out into the streets in search of a best man."

"A very unexpected turn of affairs," said Watson.

"Apparently, they'd arranged the ceremony to take place at the Church by the Sea because it's next door to the Bal Harbour Shops. And you know what there are many of in the Bal Harbour Shops, Watson?"

"Yes. Fine jewelers: Cartier, Harry Winston, Tiffany, Graff."

"Yes, so Norton went to fetch the ring and then met Irene Adler at the church next door. After the ceremony, I lingered behind them as they made their way to the church door where they stopped. Here they separated. He was returning to his condo in the Continuum to wrap up his affairs. She was going back to Star Island to get her car and, as she told Norton, 'I will go to my personal trainer the way I normally do so the staff won't suspect anything,' which naturally led me to think they were going to leave Miami immediately, something which would have necessitated precipitous action on my part, I needn't tell you, Watson."

"No, you only have till Monday."

"Correct, Watson," Holmes said, pushing the room service cart away from his chair and going over to the bar where he picked up the phone. "We only have till Monday."

"*We?*"

"I was hopeful, Watson, that I could rely on your cooperation."
"I'd be delighted, of course."

Holmes spoke into the phone.

"Send Nelia up for my room service cart." He hung up. "You don't mind breaking the law?"

"Not in the least."

"Nor chancing arrest?"

"Not in a good cause."

"Oh, the cause is excellent!"

"Then I am your man."

"I was sure that I could count on you."

"But what do you want me to do?"

"I want you to assault me on the sidewalk in front of her house."

Chapter 6

The Plan

“What?”

Now it was Watson’s turn to jump out of his chair.

“Go get a hat and a jacket while I go in and change into my new persona. We have to hurry, because she will return soon from her session with the trainer.”

Ten minutes later, Watson returned in time to see Holmes come out of his dressing room looking like an elderly Cuban gentleman, complete with white long-sleeved linen guayabera, an elegant moustache, and carrying a Panama hat. On his wrist, he wore a gaudy gold bracelet with large links.

“The Panama hat the Crown Prince wore gave me the idea to dress as a wealthy Cuban man.”

“Very impressive,” Watson nodded.

He went over to the bar where he took three panatelas from a humidor and tucked them into his top left shirt pocket.

“I think these expensive Montecristos ought to finish the look quite successfully.”

It was not merely that Holmes changed his costume. His expression, his manner, his very soul seemed to vary with every fresh part that he assumed. Here he stooped a little, which enhanced the effect of the gray coloring he’d brushed into his hair. The stage lost a fine actor when Sherlock Holmes IV followed in his ancestor’s footsteps to become a specialist in crime.

In very little time they made the short trip down Alton Road and part way over the MacArthur Causeway to the bridge connecting the Causeway to Star Island. Holmes positioned them under a hundred-year old banyan tree with its many gnarled limbs just to the south of the driveway Irene Adler (now Irene Norton) would use when she returned. The Rodriguez landscaping crew (about six men) worked directly across the

street. Carlos Rodriguez came over and Holmes had a few words with him. Then he turned back to Watson.

“You see,” remarked Holmes, “this marriage rather simplifies matters. The Bornholm Diamond becomes a double-edged weapon now. The chances are that she would be as horrified at its being seen by her new billionaire husband as our client is for it to be found missing in Stockholm. Now the question is, Where do we find the diamond and relieve both parties of their anxieties?”

“Where, indeed?”

“It is most unlikely she carries it about with her. She knows that the Crown Prince is capable of having her waylaid and searched. Two attempts have already been made. We may take it, then, that she does not carry it about with her.”

“Where, then?”

“Her banker or her lawyer. There is that double possibility. But I am inclined to think neither. Women are naturally secretive, and they much prefer to conceal things themselves. Why should she hand it over to anyone else? She could trust her own guardianship, but she could not tell what indirect or political influence might be brought to bear upon a businessman, even one so powerful and rich as Norton. Besides, remember that she had resolved to use it within a few days. It must be where she can lay her hands upon it at a moment’s notice. It must be in her own house.”

“But it’s been burgled—twice.”

“Hah! They did not know how to look.”

“But how will you look?”

“I will not look.”

“What then?”

“I will get her to show me.”

“But she will refuse.”

“She won’t be able to. But look—there’s the signal from Carlos’s man.”

He pointed to the corner where the road curved. They saw one of the yardmen stationed there wave a red handkerchief.

"She comes, Watson. Go to your position."

Watson moved to the far side of the driveway and turned around to walk back in the direction he'd just come from. Holmes began walking toward Watson and they'd almost just met as Irene Norton pulled into her driveway between them in her CL65 AMG Mercedes. She drove up to the closed garage door, only a few feet from the two men, so she was just getting out of her car as a stooped and dignified older Holmes passed by Watson.

She very clearly witnessed Watson turn around and hit Holmes over the head with a blackjack.

Holmes cried out as he fell to the pavement bleeding from the head.

Watson ripped the gold bracelet off Holmes's hand and bolted down the street as Rodriguez's men from across the street raced over, two of them running down the street after Watson while three others came to Holmes's aid.

Irene Norton came rushing down to the stricken Holmes at the same time.

"He got that gold bracelet," said one of Rodriguez's men.

"I could see it from across the street," said another.

"Oh, my God. Is he all right?" asked Irene as she leaned over.

"I don't know, Ma'am," said Rodriguez, taking a rag and wiping some of the blood from Holmes's head. "But we've got to get him out of this sun."

"Bring him inside and we'll call an ambulance."

By now, her staff had come pouring out of the house: a maid, a cleaning woman, a secretary, two bodyguards, a driver. Gently, they picked up a groaning Holmes and took him into the foyer.

"Where do you want us to put him, Ma'am?" asked Rodriguez.

"Just here in the front living room, on that couch."

"I'll call an ambulance," said the secretary, dialing on her cell phone.

“And the police,” said Mrs. Norton. She turned to her security detail, tossing one of the bruisers her car keys. “Get in the car and go after that son of a bitch. Two landscaping guys are chasing him on foot.” She turned to the maid: “Get some water and a towel. Hurry!”

As people were bustling about, their attention was diverted away from Holmes.

Rodriguez, however, was with Holmes, leaning over him and gently dabbing the rag against his bloody “injuries.”

“It’s OK, old man, you’ll be all right.”

Holmes opened his eyes and winked at Rodriguez, who winked back. Rodriguez looked over his shoulder at the two workers who’d helped carry Holmes into the house. They both had shoulder bags. Very quickly and deftly, they got out the smoke grenades and silently pulled the pins, tossing the devices into the corners.

At the same time, they raised the cry: *“Fire!”*

“Fire!”

“Fire!”

Chapter 7

House on Fire

About half an hour after the cry of *Fire!* went up in Irene Norton's house, Holmes joined Watson, meeting him down in South Pointe Park at the foot of South Beach. He arrived hidden under a muddy tarp in the back of one of Rodriguez's landscaping trucks. Watson had already been swept off Star Island by the two men who'd chased after him. One circled round to get one of the trucks and collected the others just around the bend in the drive, taking them off the island before the police could be called or Irene Norton's bodyguards could catch up with them.

Holmes hopped down off the back of the open-bedded truck and brushed some of the muck and mulch from his ruined linen guayabera, a broad smile consuming his ruddy face.

"You did it very nicely, Watson," he remarked. "Nothing could have been better."

"You have the diamond?"

"I know where it is."

"And how did you find out?"

"She showed me, as I told you she would."

"I am still in the dark."

"I don't wish to make a mystery," said he, laughing. "The matter was perfectly simple. You, of course, saw that all of Rodriguez's men were our accomplices. I engaged them all earlier."

"I guessed that much."

"Then, when you hit me over the head, I had two fake blood capsules in the palm of my hand. I fell down, clapped my hand to my face, and became a bloody mess. An old trick."

"I also assumed that."

"Then they carried me in. She was bound to have me in. What else could she do? And into her living room, which was the very room that I suspected. I was convinced the Bornholm Diamond was either in her liv-

ing room or her bedroom, and I was determined to see which. They laid me on a couch, and when everybody was occupied elsewhere, I gave the signal to Rodriguez to set off the smoke grenades."

"Ah, that was the distraction you needed."

"Yes. It was all-important. When a woman thinks that her house is on fire, her instinct is at once to rush to the thing that she values most. It is a perfectly overpowering impulse, and I have more than once taken advantage of it. A married woman grabs for her baby; an unmarried one reaches for her jewel-box. Now it was clear to me that our lady today had nothing in the house more precious to her than what we are searching for. She would rush to secure it. The alarm of fire was admirably done. The smoke and shouting were enough to shake nerves of steel. She responded beautifully. The Bornholm Diamond is in a recess behind a sliding panel just behind a purely ornamental bell-pull to the right of the fireplace. She was there in an instant, and since I was watching her like the proverbial hawk, through the smoke I caught a glimpse of her as she opened the panel halfway. When I cried out that it was a false alarm, she slid the panel back, glanced at the smoke grenade canisters, rushed from the room, and I have not seen her since. I rose, and, making my excuses, escaped from the house, followed by Rodriguez and his boys. I hesitated whether to try to secure the diamond at once, but two additional bodyguards had come into the house, the maid and the secretary returned, and as they were watching me closely, it seemed safer to wait. Too much a show of eagerness would have ruined us. And the police were on the way. Further, I am convinced she did not observe me watching her, so in her mind, the diamond is still in a secure hiding place."

"And now?" I asked.

"We are nearly finished. I will call the Prince tonight when we get back to the hotel. With him, we will call on Mrs. Norton tomorrow morning, if you care to come along with us. The staff will show us into the living room to wait for the lady, but it is probable that when she comes down she may find neither us nor the Bornholm Diamond wait-

ing for her. I thought it might provide a great deal of satisfaction to the Prince to regain the diamond with his own hands."

"And when will you call?"

"At seven-thirty. I know her intimate habits thanks to the close attention I give the gossip press. She sleeps till nine. She will not be up, so we shall have a clear field. We have no time to lose, however, for this marriage may mean a complete change in her life and habits."

They made hearty goodbyes to Carlos Rodriguez and his men, called a cab and drove up Jefferson Avenue till it reached Lincoln Road.

The staff never raised an untoward eyebrow whenever Holmes came in filthy, unkempt, wearing a moustache or a toupee. They'd seen it all.

Holmes stopped at the maître d' stand.

"Save Table 9 for me and Watson, Lupe." Then, turning to Watson, he added, "After we clean up, I think we owe ourselves a fine dinner, don't you, Watson?"

"I do, Holmes. As long as you're buying."

"What looks good on the menu tonight, Lupe?"

"Chef Hilario has a good veal chop in, he says, sautéed in rosemary butter. And I tried the fennel and cream soup," she said with a smile, her dark hair shining in the evening light.

"Sounds excellent, Lupe." He turned to Watson. "I'm sure they'll have plenty of grilled zucchini and other vegetables for you, Watson," he said with a laugh. He always made a joke of Watson's tendency to limit his diet to vegetables, however plainly or exotically prepared. Holmes would eat nearly anything, and had.

Just then, someone passing by said:

"Good night, Mr. Holmes."

They both turned around, but there were dozens of people strolling by. Watson thought the greeting came from a slender youth wearing black jeans, a dark cap and a black leather jacket with chromium studs on it. But he allowed that he could have been mistaken.

"Who was that?"

“I’m not sure, Holmes.”

Chapter 8

To Adler's House

The next morning, Watson met Holmes downstairs at his usual table outside under the awning and tucked into the farthest corner. Holmes couldn't sit too far up front because the moment people passing by recognized him, they'd stop to ask for an autograph, or worse, to talk to him.

"Sleep well, Watson?" said Holmes as he devoured an omelette.

"No. I kept having dreams that the Bornholm Diamond wouldn't be there when we show up."

"The same thought, I confess, has given me some cause for worry this morning, but I'm hoping for the best." He poured out another cup of steaming coffee, dropped a dash of cream into it and two lumps of sugar. "You really must try this omelette, Watson. It's got lobster, shrimp, cheddar cheese *and* béarnaise sauce. You'd think the béarnaise would be completely overpowered by the cheddar, which it is, but the effect is quite the opposite: the béarnaise sauce *softens* the cheddar to create a very fine delicacy. And who would think of combining lobster and shrimp into the same omelette? Only my Chef Hilario! I'm so pleased to have him here."

Watson settled for dry toast and a cup of Earl Grey.

Holmes gave him a sardonic look.

"You seem quite happy with that breakfast."

"I am, Holmes, I am," Watson smiled.

Holmes shook his head with displeasure.

"Tasteless. Toast with no butter, no marmalade. Inexcusable."

"Have you heard from the Prince?" Watson said as he finished his first piece of toast.

"I have. In fact—"

At this point, the Prince came barging round the end of the building from Jefferson Avenue and was on the verge of passing into the lobby before he noticed them sitting in the corner partially obscured by one of the many tubbed palms proliferating in Fleming House.

He rushed over and pulled up a chair, his faced flushed with anxiety and excitement. He was dressed in a pair of light brown slacks, a white silk shirt, dark glasses, but no hat.

“You’ve really got it, Holmes? You’ve really got your hands on it?”

“Not yet.”

“But you’re confident?”

“I’m confident.”

“Then, I ask you to quickly finish your breakfast so we might move ahead.”

“We are just finishing now,” said Holmes. Almost incidentally, he added in a soft, conversational tone: “Irene Adler is married.”

“Married! When?”

“Yesterday.”

“But—to whom?”

“To an American billionaire named Norton.”

“But she could not love him,” said the Prince, sitting back in his chair petulantly.

“I hope fervently that she does.”

“And why?”

“Because it would spare Your Royal Highness all fear of future annoyance. If the lady loves her husband, she does not love Your Royal Highness. If she does not love Your Royal Highness, there is no reason why she should interfere with your plans by becoming a thorn in your side.”

“It is true. I see it now. And yet! Well! I wish she had been of my own station! What a Queen she would have made!”

“You have your car here?” Holmes asked.

“Yes, just round the corner.”

“Let’s go then.”

Quickly, they made their way to the Prince’s Bentley Mulsanne waiting in Jefferson Avenue. There was a second Bentley with a security detail.

"I brought additional people with me this time."

"We will not need them. Watson, tell Lupe to give them breakfast while we are gone. Your Royal Highness, please have them wait here. We will take just the first car with the driver."

Not much was said during the short drive over to Star Island. When they arrived, the secretary answered the door, giving them a sardonic look with a slightly curled lip that did little to hide her distaste at the sight of them.

"You'll be Mr. Holmes, I suppose?" she said.

"I am Mr. Holmes," he answered, looking at her with a questioning and rather startled gaze.

"My employer said you were likely to call. She left this morning for London with her husband at five A.M. on his private jet."

"What!" Sherlock Holmes staggered back, white with chagrin and surprise. "Damn! She's left the country!"

"Yes."

"And the—?" the Prince said, his voice hoarse. "Oh, I'm ruined."

"We shall see."

Holmes pushed past the secretary and rushed into the living room, followed by the others. Holmes rushed to the bell-pull, tore back a small sliding shutter, and, plunging in his hand, pulled out a blue velvet pouch and a letter. He looked at the secretary, who shrugged.

"Mrs. Norton left very clear instructions that you were to take anything you wished from this room," said the secretary, and with that, she left the room, closing the door behind her.

Holmes opened the pouch, emptying its contents into his hand: the Bornholm Diamond was now in his palm. He handed it over to the Prince, who turned the stunning jewel over in his hands, fingering it as if it contained the magic source of all life. Finally, convinced that the diamond was the real thing, he looked up to see Holmes tapping the sealed letter against his fingers.

"She decided to leave me a letter, did she?" said the Prince.

Watson could tell Holmes did not approve of the smug tone in the Prince's voice. He flipped the letter round so they both could read the front.

"Actually, it's addressed to *me*," said Holmes, immediately tearing it open.

Chapter 9

The Letter

Both Watson and the Prince moved around to look over his shoulder.

The letter was dated 3:30 A.M. that morning and read:

“Dear Mr. Holmes:

“You really did it very well. You took me in completely. Until the cry of ‘Fire,’ I suspected nothing. But then, when I realized how I had given myself away, I began to consider many things. I had been warned against you months ago. I had been told that, if the Prince hired an agent, it would certainly be you. And after having been warned about you, I made certain I knew where your hotel was located. Still, with all this, you made me reveal what you wanted to know. Even after I became suspicious, I found it hard to think evil of such a dear, kind old Cuban gentleman who’s been beaten and robbed. But, you know, Mr. Holmes, I am an actress myself. Male costumes and makeup are nothing new to me.

“I am not the only famous actress to take advantage of the freedom that male disguise offers. Angelina Jolie and Gwyneth Paltrow are two of my friends who use it more often than the average person would think.

“So, when the fire alarm was called off, I ran out of the room, telling some of my people to go in and watch you. I ran upstairs to get into a pair of black jeans, which I topped off with a dark cap and a black leather jacket, so I’d look like a boy just off his Harley.

“Well, after you escaped in the landscaper’s truck, I acted on my hunch, and had my driver follow you to the door of your hotel, just to be absolutely certain that I was the focus of attention from the celebrated Sherlock Holmes.

“By this time it was getting dark, and I took the chance (rather stupidly, I knew at the time), to wish you good night. I couldn’t resist the temptation.

“I then went down to the Continuum where I discussed the situation with Jeffrey. We both thought the best thing to do would be to leave im-

mediately. As you know, Jeffrey is a very wealthy man, and also a very powerful one. Just as powerful and well connected in his way as the Prince is in his. So I expect we will not have any further trouble from His Royal Highness.

“He now has possession of the Bornholm Diamond. He may rest at ease that I will say nothing of our affair, and I urge you to destroy this letter as soon as you’ve read it.

“I love and am loved by a better man than the Prince. He may move ahead with his life with no fear of any interference from me, a woman he has cruelly wronged.

“I will ask one favor from him, however: that when he replaces the fake Bornholm Diamond with the real one, he give the fake to you, Mr. Holmes, so that someday in the future I might retrieve it from you—personally.

“I believe that, while he would not do anything like this for me, he most certainly would do it for you—if you will just ask him.

“I am sorry that we never got to spend any real time together without our disguises, Mr. Holmes, and hope that the day will come when we shall meet again.

“Sincerely,

“Irene Norton, *née*, Adler.”

“What a woman—oh, what a woman!” cried the Prince after we’d all read this letter. The Prince smirked, bouncing up and down on his heels. “Didn’t I tell you how quick, how smart she was? How strong? What a Queen she would have made. If only she’d been on my level.”

“From what little I have seen of the lady, she seems, indeed, to be on a very different level to that of Your Royal Highness,” said Holmes.

There was no mistaking the coldness in his voice, thought Watson.

Watson could also tell the Prince hadn’t noticed Holmes’s tone. He was too happy perhaps to notice anything at all, anything except that he was free now.

Chapter 10

Settling the Fee

“I am immensely indebted to you, Mr. Holmes,” said the Prince. “You and Mr. Watson will be my guests at the wedding. Our Washington ambassador will contact you about that. I am leaving for Stockholm immediately. I need all the time I can get to get the real diamond in its rightful place. Before I go, I want to settle your fee in full.”

“What you gave already is more than sufficient and generous, Your Royal Highness,” said Holmes, still quite detached.

“There must be something I can offer you.”

Watson saw Holmes’s mood noticeably brighten as he walked over to the fireplace, pulled a match from a coat pocket, lit it and brought the flame to the edge of the letter.

“Well, there is *one* little thing,” he said with a smile, holding the now burning letter over the hearth.

“Name it and it shall be yours, Mr. Holmes,” the Prince beamed as he watched Holmes drop the last flaming bit of the letter into the fireplace and stomp on the ashes to scatter them.

“I’ll have the fake Bornholm Diamond, just as suggested in Irene Adler’s letter. You will not have any use for it once you’ve replaced the original.”

The Prince nodded, thinking. Then he smiled, spreading his arms in a friendly gesture.

“You shall have it, Mr. Holmes. With my compliments. I will send it to you by diplomatic pouch and the ambassador will have a courier deliver it into your hands personally.”

Holmes bowed slightly from the neck.

“I am very grateful to Your Royal Highness.”

“There. That’s an end to it. To a very disagreeable episode in my life. Mr. Holmes, Mr. Watson, I must leave.”

With that, he turned and hurried out of the room, running like a rabbit. Then he just as quickly reappeared.

"How rude of me, Mr. Holmes. May I drive you back to the hotel?"

"Very kind of you, Your Royal Highness. You run along. We'll make our own way. You have a long journey ahead of you."

The Prince nodded, smiled, offered a mock salute, and disappeared again.

The secretary poked her head into the room, sniffing the burned letter and looking around suspiciously.

"Is there anything else I can do for you, Mr. Holmes?"

"Watson, can you think of anything?"

"No, Sherlock, I can't."

"Then I believe all we need is to call for a car!"

"I will call one," she said, and left the room.

As they walked out into Miami's bright sunshine, Holmes took in a deep breath.

"I'm very pleased to be here in South Beach, Watson. So much to be preferred over dreary London, don't you think?"

"No argument from me in that regard."

"You don't have to seek out interesting people with all their dark secrets and problems. They come to you here."

"Like this one," said Watson. "A very interesting case, Holmes."

"A very interesting *woman*, Watson," Holmes said softly. "A *very* interesting woman."

A car rolled into the gravel driveway.

"Will you go to Stockholm for the wedding?" Watson asked.

Holmes gave Watson a sharp look and a cocked eyebrow.

"I wonder if Chef Hilario has any more of that fennel and cream soup left."

THE END

*Black Kitty Cottage
South Beach*

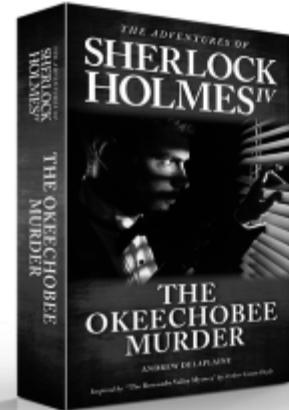
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