

Sherlock Holmes and the case of young Harrington

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Sherlock refolded the letter into a perfect square. Then he unfolded it and crafted a paper zeppelin. A little trick he picked up during his travels in the Orient. He held it above the fire in the hearth and let the heat carry it upwards before it caved in on itself and was consumed by the flames. 'What are we to do, Watson?' he said while adjusting the waistband of his cashmere chamber coat. Watson was not in the room, but Sherlock was accustomed to talking to him as though he was. It didn't matter that much that he was out. The letter was from his brother, asking for assistance in an urgent but delicate matter at the morgue of the medical school. They had found a corpse at the morgue, that was the gist of it. How very dull. However, his brother only asked for his help once a year or so, and usually these cases ended up being quite interesting indeed.

'Hello my dear Sherlock,' Mrs. Hudson said at the door, 'I brought you your tea.' 'Mrs. Hudson, I am quite certain I didn't ask for tea.' 'Orders from Mr Watson, Sherlock. He asked me to make sure you were well fed and consumed plenty of liquids. He said it would help with your adjustment to the new medications he has put you on.' 'That's enough already! Isn't a man entitled to some privacy concerning his medical situation?' 'Certainly Sherlock, I do apologise.' She left the tray with tea and biscuits at his side, on the side table of his comfy chair. As she turned to close the door to apartment 221B, he muttered 'It's about time they made some progress on those robotic chamber maids. I'd be the first to order one,' just loud enough for her to hear it.

He took a cup of tea but refused to have any of the biscuits. Seeing as she was apparently so well informed on his medical condition, she could have brought him some steak or lamb chops instead, he thought bitterly. The simplicity of the minds surrounding him dazzled him now and then. It was a simplicity so staggeringly far removed from his own mental capacities he had to admit he struggled imagining such a dull little brain. A tiny chamber, curtains drawn and dust specks everywhere, that was the closest he could get. Thinking of dark chambers his mind went back to his brother's letter. Alright then, he decided. Let's see if I can deduct what is in the mind of a dead man. How's that for an afternoon snack.

The medical school was situated far out on the Heath, so he took a horse-drawn carriage there. With live horses, as he hadn't yet gotten used to the speed and clunky rhythm of the new automaton-creatures. He had not foreseen the many applications of the mechano-electromagneto-battery he had invented two years ago. He had merely wanted to solve a small personal problem and now half the city was running on electricity. The medical school was housed in a Georgian mansion up on a heathery hill. Groups of students were ambling about on its lawns. A patrol man made sure none of them dared to sit down on the grass. The atmosphere was tranquil, probably nobody outside of the head of the school and the person discovering the body was aware that a crime had taken place. He got out of the cart and realised he was still in his chamber coat. Very well, I will set a new trend today, he thought, and with head held high he descended from the carriage. He had not given word of his visit, but very soon the head master was waiting for him at the entrance of the building. 'Holmes, thank you so much for coming. Trollope's the name. We have a bit of a problem on our hands.' The students were now all looking at

this new visitor, who was apparently important enough to be welcomed by the head master himself.

They went right ahead and walked straight through the main building, walked across the field and into a smaller brick building, more recently built, with a large chimney on top of it. 'Our morgue and crematorium.' headmaster Trollope announced with some pride. 'Sponsored by the Harrington family. Which is why today's situation is extra – sensitive.' Inside the building, they went past a waiting chamber with a reception desk. There was a small office, and a much larger dressing room where blood-spattered white coats hung in rows, and wellington boots were lined up under benches. 'Classes have been cancelled for the day, naturally.' In a glass cupboard, a number of intricate glasses were kept. Sherlock took one and put it on. It had several magnifying glasses that you could put in front of each other, each on its own spindly leg attached to the frame of the glasses. It looked a bit like a mechanical spider. He kept it on and they moved into the third and largest room, the morgue itself. It boasted five dissecting tables of adjustable height, and a cooling cellar underneath the room with a hydraulic lift system. All very advanced, Sherlock thought approvingly, while fiddling with his glasses. On one of the tables lay the body of a young man, in his early twenties. He had not been dissected as such, although his hands were missing and the ends of his arms carefully bandaged. A small pool of blood lay under the table. 'We thought it best to keep everything as we found it, so you can inspect the scene yourself.' They were by now joined by the morgue supervisor, the forensic specialist dr. Wagner. He explained that this body belonged to the only son of one of the new class of industrialists. In fact, it was the son of the man who had funded construction of this building and was currently president of the industrials' club of London. 'They have their own club?' Sherlock exclaimed surprised. 'Times are changing, mr Holmes,' the head master replied. 'And the powers that be are not always aware of the demands the future makes of us.' 'Oh, I'm not against it as such, it was just surprising to hear that age-old institution of the club be adopted by these new – well, by these men of the future.' They smiled approvingly. 'So this is Keith Harrington junior?' Holmes asked. 'The very same,' Wagner said. 'And you found the body, Wagner?' 'Yes, around six this morning. I wanted to prepare some fresh corpses for today's classes, and found this awaiting me. He was one of my students,' he said mournfully. 'A bright lad, though often absent.' 'And the doors to the building were not forced?' 'Well, now you mention it, that is a bit odd, isn't it? I found it locked just as it should be. And the main door as well. I usually take the back door, you see.' Here he winked at Holmes in the lewdest way possible, but Holmes seemed to fail to register this crude attempt at flirting. 'And you have not touched the body?' Holmes said so sharply that Wagner realised Holmes had picked up on his innuendo after all. He blushed and felt reprimanded. 'No, sir, I have not touched the body.' At that moment, Watson stepped into the room through the back door. 'Ah, my dear Watson,' Holmes said. 'You found my note?' 'No Holmes, I work here on Mondays, don't you remember? Trollope notified me of your visit. Silly of me, I thought you had come to see me, but of course you have found something more interesting to look at,' Watson pouted. 'yes indeed, but now that you are here, perhaps you can help us determining the cause of death?' 'Well. Blood loss is a first candidate.' 'Watson, I did not call on you to give me just a first candidate, why don't you start examining the body and see if there are other possible causes?' This cheered Watson up and he put on his rubber gloves. Holmes gave him the strange glasses. 'And perhaps you will find these useful too.' 'Why, thank you, Holmes.' The men formed a small circle around the body. The body was illuminated by a sky light; each

one of the tables had such a light, and in the beam of bright morning sun the boy seemed almost asleep. His eyes were closed and his face bore a peaceful expression. Watson's hands trembled as he slid one finger into the tranquil smile of the young man. He lifted his upper lip and nodded. 'Incisors are missing. Forcefully removed. But little blood. Could have been done post mortem.' He nodded again. Holmes observed Watson closely. Watson's hands only shook when he was feeling agitated, which was often, true, but surely such feelings were not in proportion to the task at hand. Watson tentatively placed one of the magnifying glasses over the regular lens and peered into the boy's mouth. 'Pliers, please,' he said and held out his hand. Wagner grabbed a pair from a work bench and handed them over. Watson removed a small white clump from the mouth. Sherlock exclaimed: 'Either he put up a good fight and pulled that out of his attacker's head, or that boy has some strange eating habits!' 'But – how could you tell it was hair from that distance?' 'There's one in the corner of his mouth too, I'd already seen it when I was trying out those glasses.' Watson studied the corner of the mouth. Holmes was right, annoyingly so. 'But no bruises whatsoever on the body,' Watson said, 'so if he fought, why would he have lost that battle? If they didn't even injure him, I mean.' 'They, Watson?' 'As a matter of speaking. You know, trying to move into genderneutral pronouns as it is mandatory since Her Ladyship de Bourbon has started her classes with us.' He looked at the head master and at Wagner for moral support. 'You are actually in the first place obeying that silly rule, and secondly suggesting a lady could have done this boy in?' Wagner said with contempt. 'The Bourbons are somewhat eccentric in their communicative wishes, I grant you that,' said the head master, 'but please bear in mind that when you are in earshot with the young missis Bourbon, you do try to adhere to this rule. Only when you are in earshot of course.' 'I liked it better when we didn't have to bend over backwards for private funding, I'll tell you that.' muttered Wagner. Watson moved around the body, and when he was done with the front, the men turned the boy over. 'I'll say!' exclaimed Wagner. 'What have we got here?' Under the boy's shoulder blade, in between his ribs, there was a large bruise, with a charred black area in the middle. 'It's not quite a burn, is it?' Holmes muttered, 'I know what could cause this.' 'With a large enough current, it would have stopped the heart immediately,' Watson said. 'Gentlemen, we have found our cause of death,' Holmes declared. 'And I believe it is the first of its kind, too. Death by electro-magnet. Shall we say 'electrocution'?' He beamed proudly. 'Why don't you go ahead and store this body in that fancy cellar of yours,' he said to Wagner. 'And clean this place up, will you?' the head master added. He walked Holmes and Watson back to his own office in the main building. 'Well, what can you do about this awful business?' the head master asked them once he had closed the heavy door behind them. They were standing near the window, overlooking the central lawn. All classes had started, there were no students outside. 'I've had the rumour spread that young Harrington has finally listened to his father and went to India. So as not to damage the reputation of our fine institution, you see.' 'I see,' Holmes said coolly. 'And how are we to make enquiries while no one may know that a murder has taken place here?' 'That's why your brother was kind enough to send for you, instead of the common police. Surely a man of your reputation is capable of some discretion?' Watson snorted. 'You must know Mr Holmes is terrible with secrets,' he explained to the head master. 'Really, really terrible.' Holmes gave him a poisonous stare. 'Oh, I am a bit better than that, Watson, and when we walk to the gates I shall demonstrate this to you.' They took on the case, and as they walked towards the gates, he quite abruptly said: 'Watson, please do your best to try and convince me you did not kill that young man.' 'What?' 'Well, why don't you start your

explanation by giving me the reason you did not inspect the boy's eyes just now? You are a man with an impressive career in the medical field, you must have examined more than a hundred bodies, both on the battle field and off. You know how to do an autopsy. You do realise I had to bloody wink at Wagner, twice, to distract the good doctor from this fact that you skipped over the eyes? So as not to direct any suspicion to you? Winked, Watson, I winked.' 'I'm so sorry, Sherlock,' his old friend said. They were standing at the gates, on a leafy lane. No carriages were to be seen. 'Shall I call for one?' Watson said. 'Not you too,' Holmes sighed, while Watson pulled out a copper loudhailer from his doctor's bag and shouted 'cab at Woolstone road please – cab at Woolstone road'. The sound was amplified tenfold through usage of an electro-battery. 'Mark my words, pretty soon all of London will be using loudhailers,' Watson said. 'Pretty soon all of London will need to, because of the severe ear damage these things cause!' Holmes retorted. A cab appeared just as a light rain was beginning to fall on Holmes' chamber coat. 'Fine,' he muttered. And they got in to the cab. 'Good to see you two,' the man already on board said. 'Mycroft,' Holmes replied. His mood was growing darker by the second.

'My dear brother, how are you? If my memory doesn't fail me it's nearing that time of the month again.' 'Shut up, Mycroft. You didn't come here to talk about lunar cycles. You want to know about the boy.' 'Well, I wanted to warn you, actually. Discretion is very important, as Harrington senior will announce his candidacy for one of the top positions in this country tonight, at the Industrialists' meeting. He wants to run for major, and I speak on behalf of my esteemed colleagues and myself when I say we at the Ministry of Internal Affairs would support his candidacy full heartedly.' 'You mean you despise Lord Kuzofsky so much you would rather support a nitwit factory owner over a Polish immigrant from Jewish descent?' 'That is not what I mean at all,' Mycroft said icily. 'Please do not try to understand politics, Sherlock, you're dreadful at it.' 'But surely he knows, about his son.' Watson said. 'Oh yes, he does, he was informed first thing this morning, but nobody else knows yet. He needs the votes tonight, of the members of the new party. If they find out about this, no one will vote for him. I mean, it's not just a tragic death, it's a brutal slaughter with an unknown motive; it might have something to do with his impending candidacy.' 'It might indeed,' Holmes said cheerfully. 'Thank you brother, that was very helpful.' The carriage was stopped and Mycroft got out. 'And good luck, Sherlock!' he said. 'Luck has got nothing to do with it,' Sherlock sneered at his brother's back. When his brother had left them, Holmes fell into a brooding mood. Watson looked over some notes and in this manner they spent the time until they arrived home, at 221b Baker Street.

Ms Hudson was waiting for them and anxiously said to Watson: 'I tried to give him tea, but he didn't touch the cookies and hardly drank anything.' 'Thank you for your help, we'll just keep on trying to look after him, as he won't do it himself.' Holmes and Watson went up to their floor and sat in their trusty armchairs by the hearth. 'Well,' Holmes said. 'I'd like your explanation now please.' 'Holmes, of course I did not kill that boy.' 'I'm not saying you did it on purpose, but you did see him the evening before he was killed, didn't you?' 'How did you know that?' 'I noticed these white hairs on your jacket; the same type of hair as in the boy's mouth. You don't like hunting; you surely did not pluck a rabbit together and made stew.' 'You already know why I didn't examine his eyes, don't you? You just want to hear me say it, so you can then tell me how clever you are.' 'Well, go ahead, no need to dawdle like this.' 'I didn't examine his eyes because I knew he was a werewolf and it would show there.'

He had come to me a few months earlier, begging for my help. He didn't want to go to his own physician, and so I was the doctor closest in his vicinity. He trusted me. At the time, I couldn't offer him any treatment but I gave him some instructions to minimise the damage he would do during his episodes. But when Johanson had reached her breakthrough, well, I wanted to try it out on the boy before I prescribed it to you. He had been taking it for about a month now, so his symptoms would have been significantly milder than before. I had observed him two moons hence, see. I wanted to give him an extra injection as he had responded quite well to that last month, so I arranged to meet him at the morgue yesterday evening. He had been out drinking heavily – he said it was the night before but it seemed to me like he was still drunk. He knew one shouldn't combine this medication with alcohol. He was showing signs of premature changing; his hands were clawlike, his incisors were somewhat enlarged, and his eyes had that red spot in the pupils. Oddly he didn't demonstrate hair growth. I didn't want to give him extra medication while he was intoxicated, so I urged him to lay low that night and come back to me when he was sober.' 'So what I am wondering,' Holmes said after taking a sip of his whisky, 'is who would remove the tell-tale signs of a werewolf but is not expert enough to know that he should also check the eyes for red spots.' Someone going by the most crude form of folk wisdom there is.' 'And someone who didn't want anyone to know that this boy was a wolf.' 'Holmes, do you think the father did this? But what father would murder his own child?' 'I'm not sure yet, Watson. But surely there are bigger predators than werewolves about.' He grinned and Watson said: 'Careful with that whisky, I have just given you a cautionary tale about mixing alcohol and medicine.' Holmes finished the rest of his glass with one big gulp. 'Watson, one more thing; when you met the young Harrington, he must have already gone out hunting, because you both had rabbit fur on you.' 'Yes, I think he had already done that. His clothes were muddy too.' 'So his hunting instincts had already come on strong. And what time did you say you two met?' 'Just after sundown.' 'And if he was transitioning anyway; someone must have killed him while he was in full wolf state.' 'That is no small feat.' 'Even when you attack from the back, the wolf will have smelled you from hundreds of meters away...' 'Do you know where his safe place was?' 'I believe I do.' 'Let's see if we can find our murder scene, shall we?' 'But Sherlock, we've only just gotten home.' 'Stop whining, Watson, and put on your coat.' 'Only if you will too, this time.'

'To St James' church, good chap,' Watson said to the coachman. Holmes snarled when the motorised horses were set in motion. 'You did take your medicine this morning?' 'Yes, Watson. Allright, I admit, being able to be out and about this day of the month does feel rather nice, and as you see I show very few signs, so it seems we have found an antidote to my condition.' '“We” Holmes?' 'Well, I read that paper, and I suggested you contact Fraulein Johanson, its brilliant author, so I had something to do with it.' When they arrived on Piccadilly, Watson tipped the driver generously for his speed. 'We do need to get back before sun down, just in case,' Holmes said. 'Of course, so we better hurry with our investigations then.' St James was a quaint little church right in the middle of Westminster. Its red bricks shone warmly in the late morning sun. Just as they pushed open the door, its bells started ringing. 'The Church of England wants us back, Holmes,' Watson said jokingly. 'Noon service about to start,' Holmes muttered. 'Excellent, the vicar will be busy. It's the crypt, I presume?' 'Yes.' They moved around the few seated believers, and found the entrance to the crypt easily enough. Holmes smoothly picked the lock and they entered the dark vault. A battery-operated candle was burning on the stone wall of the staircase. The damp smell of decay hit their nostrils, along with a hint of animal. 'Should have had a

bit to eat beforehand,' Holmes muttered. The crypt was a narrow and low tunnel with caskets tucked away into pigeonholes in the walls on both ends. It seemed to run through the full length of the church, starting at the entrance and ending underneath the altar. 'Not much to break around here,' Holmes said approvingly. 'The boy had his own set of keys,' Watson explained. 'It return for a generous donation to the church of course.' 'Excellent arrangement.' 'Also, thick walls, no one can hear you howl.' 'He would have his prey pre-delivered?' Holmes asked. 'Yes, they had worked that bit out too.' 'And would he have been picked up?' 'Transport was mandatory, yes, his father was quite strict in that. Their driver would pick him up after classes and take him straight here.' Suddenly, they heard a scuttling further along, in the dark. Watson grabbed something from his coat, and it was as if lightning hit. 'Wait, our eyes will adjust to this,' he said to Holmes as he moved the beam of the electric candle around. And soon enough, they did and caught in the beam a deer was staring at them, steam coming from its quivering nostrils. It seemed to be in good health. 'Well, young Harrington did not eat his dinner yesterday,' Holmes said drily. 'So as he was already in transition...' They ignored the deer and walked to the other end of the tunnel and back. No traces of blood or fighting, nothing on the packed earthen floor, and no marks on the walls or coffins. 'Quite unlikely that he came here and let that juicy bit of meat walk free,' Holmes said while staring at the deer intensely. 'Oh well, back to school we go, Watson, let's see his living arrangements.' 'What about the deer?' Watson asked. 'It's a waste of good meat, that's for sure. Very likely the Harrington servants will take care of her though.'

This time they took a regular carriage up North. The campus was bustling with students. 'Why was young Harrington living here?' Holmes asked, 'I thought this was solely for students from out of town.' 'I believe there was some tension between father and son that led to this compromise.' 'He was kicked out?' 'That is the rumour, yes.' 'Watson, would it be socially acceptable to have a werewolf for a son?' Watson snorted, 'It is most certainly not, you know where the abandoned wolves live, don't you? The ones that are not thrown overboard in the middle of the sea, that is.' Holmes replied: 'And for someone with great ambition it would be even less advantageous to have such a child.' 'You know what they say about bad blood – ' Watson gasped, 'Harrington senior could also be one!' 'Yes, yes, but even if he is not, the suspicion alone would be enough to kill that man's career. Speaking about killing, I am getting peckish.' They were walking past the main building towards the row of brand new town houses at the edge of the forest. 'I think I'm going to take a stroll first.' Sherlock said, 'I'll give you a head start on inspecting his room.' Watson noted how Holmes' pace was speeding up as he approached the woodlands. His condition was almost under control, but not quite, he thought. He went up to the houses and found the right one straight away. A black flag with a picture of a test tube was hanging from a freestanding pole. This was where the chemistry students were living. He would have to be discreet and had not thought about an alibi to search Harrington's room. His fellow students still had no idea about the tragedy. The door burst open just as he wanted to knock. 'Afternoon, professor Watson!' the young man exclaimed as he hurried past. Watson grabbed the door and let himself in. Most students were at their classes, the house was quiet. Watson frowned at the stench. Leftovers and chemistry hobby projects mixed with spilled ale made for an interesting blend.

Downstairs was the students' lair. He almost tripped over a few empty wine bottles and frowned at the unhygienic state of the chesterfields. He made his way upstairs,

avoiding a pile of unopened mail. Each door had a little copper name plate. Harrington's room was on the far end of the first floor. The door was locked. Watson quickly took out the master key the head master had lent him, and entered the chamber. It was in a similar state as the communal spaces. Clothes, bottles, papers, were everywhere. Watson walked to the window and drew the curtains. The room was overlooking the forest. Where to begin his inspections? He was looking for a place to sit (all the chairs were filled with books, knickknacks and papers) and ended up on the bed. It was unmade and the sheets were ruffled. A pine green duvet was covering just the foot end. He straightened it and found a white satin pair of ladies' undergarments. It was ripped at the seam, he noticed on closer inspection. It disturbed him, and he carefully packed it into his bag. He wandered around the room but found nothing else of interest. As he got up to leave, he noticed that an outer coat hung from the inside of the door. He glanced at the labelling. Could very well be Harringtons. It was the middle of winter, a bit odd for him to have left his room without putting on his coat. As he was already transitioning – and intoxicated – the cold presumably wouldn't have bothered him all that much. He felt the pockets. His wallet was there, a large leather number. In it: a bank receipt and a lot of cash. He studied the receipt. It seemed like old Harrington was quite serious about his son moving to India; it was from an Indian bank, proving the start of a new account in young Harrington's name. In the inner pocket was also a small flask. He sniffed it. It was Harrington's serum X, mixed with brandy. Damn fool. In one of the outer pockets he found a white ribbon, the kind young ladies liked to weave in their hair. Watson tried to remember if Harrington was wearing his coat when he came to see him that previous evening, but he couldn't. He took the ribbon as well; it would be easier to track down the owner of that than of the underpants. Could be the same girl. Someone walked up the hallway and stopped right in front of the door. He froze in place. He was right on the other side and looked for a place to hide. Nothing. The door handle started to move. Small scratching sounds came from inside the lock, but then whoever it was discovered the door was unlocked. He tiptoed to the side in a last hope to hide behind the door itself if it was swung open widely enough. Fortunately, it was. A young lady came in and marched straight to the bed, searching through its covers and looking underneath it. She was cursing under her breath in a very unladylike tone, though Watson couldn't place the Eastern European language she was using. He had only seen a glimpse of her black velvet dress and smelled her perfume of violets. He felt a sneeze coming up and squeezed his nose to prevent it. Then, heavy footsteps on the stairs. Please pass this door, Watson thought, please pass this door. But instead the footsteps barged right into Harrington's room, and his hiding place was instantly discovered. 'Watson, you silly man, what are you doing?' Holmes asked while he closed the door behind him. The girl shrieked and looked at the two of them. 'Fun fact,' Holmes said while holding out his hand for her to shake, 'Perpetrators often return to their crime scene to remove evidence – or simply to gloat. Sherlock Holmes, how do you do?' 'Katharina de Bourbon, pleased to meet you.' though she looked anything but pleased, she did make a small curtsy. 'And you were just... stopping by?' Holmes asked her. 'I had left some personal belongings here that I wanted to pick up, that is all. Harrington said he would put them over there' – she pointed at the bed – 'but well, I couldn't find them.' She wasn't blushing at all, Watson noticed. She even pointed to the bed just now, which was quite a bold move to make for a proper Victorian lady. Maybe in her home country they had different values. 'I should go now.' she said bluntly and took her leave without greeting the men. 'Feisty young lady,' Holmes said approvingly. 'Now, Watson, what do you think she was looking for?' 'Oh, I have a pretty good idea, in fact, it is in my pocket right

now.' 'I see.' Holmes took in the room. 'And no traces of violence or skirmishes?' 'None that I could find.' 'I'll have a look myself then.' Holmes moved around the room with his typical long strides, like a smug flamingo, Watson thought. The moment he thought this, Holmes turned around and faced him, wearing a triumphant expression. 'Nothing at all, Watson?' Then he pointed at the night stand. Watson frowned. On it were some periodicals and a small candle. Watson sighed and said: 'Just tell me, Holmes.' Holmes pointed at the candle. 'There are fingerprints on the wax. Looks like someone grabbed the candle while it was burning – look, it's squeezed, like someone was using a bit of force.' 'All right, fine, the candle was strangled, now can we go?' 'Certainly,' Holmes said, as he slipped the candle into his pocket.

They walked out of the students' dorm building and stood for a moment on one of the lawns. It was teatime and now Watson was the one getting hungry. 'It's only natural that she would want to defend her reputation,' Watson said as he had discreetly shown Holmes the unmentionables he had found. 'We wouldn't want to put any undue stress on her by interviewing her today, would we?' he continued. 'Though I wonder where she is headed.' At this, Holmes grinned and pointed at his nose. 'There are advantages at this time of the month.' He briefly pressed the garments to his nose and then they started following the trail. It led them straight to the main exit of the campus, where Ms De Bourbon was getting into a coach. The men sprinted towards her and jumped in too. It was a public coach, a six-seater. Next to Ms de Bourbon were two students, the seats opposite them were still empty. 'Heading towards the Tower?' Holmes asked the driver through the small window. 'That's alright sir, we're heading towards Westminster.' Ms de Bourbon gave them a look that could kill. Watson discreetly asked the driver for Ms de Bourbon's destination. Then he discreetly slipped him some bank notes and asked again. This time, the driver complied. Fulham Palace, well, well. Holmes suddenly poked his head through the driver's window and started his own negotiations. At some point he traded a twenty pound note for a ten pound note which he carefully placed inside an envelope before tucking it into his pocket. One of the students now yelled at the driver: 'Can you all stop blabbering and start driving? Pub is closing in three hours, you know!'

After he had dropped Holmes off at the Tower, his regular hiding place at full moon, Watson went to the Industrialists' club. It was on the South side of the Thames, a daring location. In the South there was nothing but factories and those factories' workers' residencies, long rows of soot covered brick houses. The club was located right on the banks, though, all the way at the top of the latest and most prestigious industrial experiment. It was a water energy plant, using massive wheels half-submerged in the river. A formidable building, stretched out right across from St Pauls. Several high chimneys were expelling steam. In the main hall, which was high as a cathedral, stood massive copper turbines, connected to those wheels. Despite the cold November outside, the turbines generated so much heat the workers were all in shirtsleeves, their brows beaded with sweat as they ran their tests. The plant was not yet fully functional, but the owners were confident that within a ten-year span the whole city would run on water energy. Watson passed the deafening whirring and humming of the turbines and got escorted into the elevator by a hostess. It was a metal cage suspended from the ceiling, using four pulleys instead of the usual two. It was so light even a child could do the work, as proven by the boy of about ten years old who was operating the lift system. He was chained to a chair fixed to a block of concrete, and as he pulled the elevator up, the block headed downwards. He waived

at the passengers when they were at the same height. Shortly after, they arrived at the top floor. Here, the sounds from the turbines and the inner workings of the factory were only a dim sea-like rushing. Booming voices, heels on marble and piano music rushed at him when he put his shaking legs on solid ground again. He tried not to think of having to use that elevator again.

In the meantime, Holmes was in a cage of his own - three stories below ground, below the river, in a cell reserved for him by his brother. As the dusk had set, he undressed in his private chamber and placed his clothes in a neat pile on the bed. He took some items from the pockets of his chamber coat, sprinkled them with a grey powder, and proceeded to examine them with a magnifying glass. 'Just as I thought,' he mumbled. On a small table was laid out a chess game in progress. He played this with his warden, one move every month. He glanced at the pieces, and then moved into the adjacent cell and had his warden close, lock and barricade the heavy iron doors, all three of them. His private chamber was illuminated by several of his battery-operated lamps, but here in his cell all was dark. There was nothing there, no furniture, no ornaments of any sort. Even though he felt pretty good on his current dose of the serum, he didn't want to take any risks. If he managed to get through without transitioning further than his present state, then maybe he would be able to spend next month outside. The lack of natural light down here had always had a preventive effect, though. It would be hard to tell how things would go if he went outside with his current dose and be directly exposed to the moonlight. He was sentenced to life, but at the same time he was completely free in his mind. He lay down on the humid earth and thought about the chess game. He played it all the way through, several times, and even though he was fully immersed in this, he suddenly realised he had forgotten to ask Watson something. He had suspected the boy's father from the beginning, after all, people are usually murdered by the ones closest to them, but this afternoon he had moved to a new prime suspect. It wasn't the lock picking, lock picking was a fun and useful hobby that was well suited for ladies with delicate hands, much better than bear wrestling or ice fishing, for example. The thought of ice fishing quickly escalated into a vivid hallucination of grabbing a fat salmon with his claws and sinking his teeth into the flailing flesh. The last thing he was aware of was the saliva dripping from his mouth. Then he lost consciousness and the beast took over.

Watson was on the guest list, as he had guessed from Mycroft's visit to them that morning. He stood in the large auditorium, looking out over the dark city. The sky was overcast, and only a few prosperous areas had some form of gas lighting. Wood fires had been banned from the streets after the previous great fire had ravaged a large part of SoHo. Some said this measure was pushed through the council by those who were producing newer forms of lighting, to increase demand. On the stage in the corner of the room, Harrington senior was calmly preparing his speech. Is this the face of someone who has just lost his son? Watson wondered. The room was filling up quickly, to Watson's relief there was also a staircase, which spat out a stream of visitors. Once everyone had a drink in hand, the electric light near the stage was switched on and people walked up, like moths to a flame, an excited buzz going around the room. They were welcomed by Professor Hardy, their host of the evening, who was head of research and development at the water power plant, and 'extremely pleased to announce' the first guest speaker, Mr Harrington. 'Mr Harrington is a visionary, you and I are all very fortunate to be alive in such an exciting era, to mingle with men such as Mr Harrington. I believe tonight he will have a special announcement for us all.' Mr Harrington all but shoved Hardy off the stage and

declined use of the loudspeaker that was offered while the crowd roared their welcome. 'Good evening,' he smiled and spread his arms wide, as if to embrace the entire room. He then hooked his thumbs in the pockets of his woollen trousers. The room fell silent. His belly was almost as impressive as his massive voice, Watson thought. Harrington 'I will keep it short tonight, as we have something exciting planned for you folks. You all know how we at Harrington Industries have worked for the common good. Now, after 7 years of running a number of factories, I am ready to run for something bigger. I hereby announce that I have come here to ask for your support when I run for major next month.' The crowd broke into cheers. Harrington laughed his booming laugh and said: 'I take it that is a yes?' Some people at the front shook his hand and slapped him on the back. He was offered cigars all around. The next half an hour Watson was cornered by an acquaintance who wanted to reminisce about the war. When the next speaker was announced, Watson saw this as the perfect excuse and moved to the front of the hall. A tall dark gentleman patiently waited for the room to quieten. Watson was certain he had never seen the man before, and yet he seemed somewhat familiar. When he started to speak, this impression became stronger. He had been introduced as Count Albescu, a member of the Czech nobility, part of a progressive family. This had led to some snickering among the audience. Count Albescu struggled with his English but nevertheless managed to explain that he was going to demonstrate the man-sized thing beneath the red sheet next to him. After the unveiling, people gasped in admiration and horror. It was a copper automaton, shaped like a woman, dressed in a soldier's uniform, 'Dies is Claudia' the Count said proudly. 'She will kill! We chave automatons for riding the coaches, we chave for working the factorings, and now we will chave for making the war!' Count Albescu said. Then he pressed some buttons at the back of the machine. Her – no, its, Watson reprimanded himself – eyes lit up in a pale blue, and then its arms started clawing forward as if wanting to embrace someone. The right arm ended in a hand with five metal fingers that held on tight to a small army knife. The left arm ended in a metal bar. The Count pressed another button and she opened her mouth and said: 'final words – give me your final words'. Then the metal bar started crackling. An associate had come up and explained this military robot would humanise war by presenting a gentle motherly form as the last thing the enemy soldiers would see, and by recording their final words so that they could be preserved for posterity. Also, it would save the lives of young men by taking their place on the battle fields. And that this was but a prototype, and they were in search of investors. But Watson missed this explanation because he had had a revelation strike him the moment he heard the automaton speak and was now hurrying down the stairs. And on the rhythm of his footsteps he sang: 'I have solved the murder.' When he came to the last steps he rounded it off by 'who's the smart one now, Sherlock?' which for good measure he repeated a number of times, all the way up to the exit of the building. Then he doubled over and struggled to catch his breath. His skin felt clammy underneath his jacket, and he realised that he too had forgotten his overcoat today. Waiting for his heart to recover, he looked around him at the wintery city. A few workers were hurrying by, going to one of the factories for their night shift. A thick mist had crawled out from the Thames and muffled all sounds; a factory bell, the hooves of a lone coach approaching him over the banks from the West. He jumped up and down, waving for the coach to stop, but it flashed right by him. He decided to take the ferry across instead, as he would have better luck catching a carriage in Westminster than here on the wrong side of the river. He shivered all the way to the other side, caught a carriage to the Tower, urged the driver to wait for him, left a message for Holmes stating his whereabouts and his

revelation, hopped back into the carriage and headed west along the river, all the way to Fulham Palace. This impressive estate used to house the Bishops of London, but nowadays it was privately owned, by the de Bourbon family. The house was well suited to this family in its sternness and sober facades. It was huge but unassumingly so. No frilly towers or stately courtyard here. Just the classical lines of the main building, with some Tudor quaintness in the surrounding low buildings. Watson had the coach stop at the gates, and waited for it to pass before he slung himself over the iron fence and scurried away through the bushes. How odd the rest of the family was not present at the industrialists' meeting tonight, he thought. Surely, you would want to support your father or uncle or whoever it was that had used your voice to breathe life into an automaton. He suddenly realised he had not yet informed the police. Well, surely he could handle this alone? It was only a young woman he was dealing with, and the killing machine was on the other side of town.

The house was brightly, but coldly, lit, like an ice palace. When he knocked on the front door, it swung open immediately, seemingly of its own accord. It was dark inside, but now a small light appeared at the end of the corridor. Hesitantly he stepped inside. 'Please come in,' he heard that familiar voice say. Then the young ms de Bourbon stood in front of him, almost like she had glided through the air. 'We have automatised our door, do you like it, doctor Watson?' 'Well, it is very modern,' he answered. 'I apologise for calling on you at this hour, I hope I haven't woken you,' he said. 'Well, if I had been asleep, I would not have opened the door. Do come in,' they went into a surprisingly cosy drawing room, where a good fire was burning. No one else was around. Watson's nerves had been given a small shock by that door, but now that he realised he was alone with a murderer, he became very agitated. Best to just get it sorted out right away, he thought, and as she was pouring him something from the liquor cabinet, he said to her back; 'I have reason to believe you murdered young Harrington.' He was hoping she would simply deny it, so he could go home and get to bed. But instead she turned around slowly and said very friendly: 'Well of course you do, why else would you show up here in the middle of the night? I'm a bit surprised it is just you, though, this morning you were with that strange man. Here is your brandy, by the way.' They sat down. He noticed she didn't cross her legs but kept them next to each other. Must be a Czech custom. The heat of the fire and the heat of the brandy soothed him. 'The rest of your household is asleep, I presume? What was your mother's name, I think I forgot.' She smiled and said: 'It is just me and my companion, and you probably know where he is tonight.' 'You mean your father?' 'Yes, if you please.' 'But you do not share a name?' he asked. 'Where I am from, it is customary for a child to take the name of their mother.' 'I see.' Watson took out his notebook and said 'Why don't you tell me what happened.' 'Yes, I would like that,' she said. 'And then maybe I will kill you too,' she added in that same friendly tone. 'Why don't you begin your story?' Watson asked, amused by her threat.

'We arrived here this past summer. I enrolled at Hampstead medical school and my co – father had bought a research facility that develops all sorts of automatons. He had already done some work in this direction in our home lands, and wanted to use the advanced technologies developed over here to further his plans. Me, I am interested in human bodies and wanted to learn as much as I could about them. You see, we don't wish to make automatons only, our ultimate goal is to merge human with automaton completely. To make a new breed of human; strong, intelligent, durable and easy to fix, without differentiating into male and female. Bred in factories, made to last centuries. Created equal. Can you imagine?' she beamed with

delight. She had baffled Watson. 'Yes, you don't see this happening yet, you think we are crazy. Don't worry, in time people will see what we can do. It will take time, a lot of time, but we have time. Now, to your question... as you know, I am the first and only female at medical school. At first they did not want me to participate in the autopsies – 'Yes, I remember,' Watson said. 'Every day the boys make snide remarks and sometimes they touch me.' 'That is terrible!' he cried out. She gave a bitter smile. 'That is daily reality, I can handle it. I always stay out of their rooms. They have tried in so many ways to lure me to their rooms. Harrington was particularly persistent in this matter.' 'He had a soft spot for you, perhaps?' Watson asked. 'He *was* a soft spot. He stole my notebook in class, took it out of my satchel. Placed a note on my table saying if I wanted to ever see it again I had to come get it during a romantic dinner in his apartment.' Watson laughed heartily. 'Clever boy!' 'He stole my notebook! He knew it is the most precious thing to me, and he took it!' She banged her fist on the little table, rattling the silverware and the glasses. 'I knew he had a class with professor Rasmussen until 4 p.m., so I decided to break into his room to take back what was mine. I couldn't find it though; he must have kept it on him. So I went to his dinner.' She spat out that last word. 'This was yesterday evening?' 'No, the day before that. I sat down, at his insistence, and then he locked the door behind me. His mates had all gone out – maybe he had asked them too. Nobody responded to my calls.' They were silent for a while and then she said. 'I know the Russian self defence systems, all seven of them, I am a trained fighter.' He noticed how she rubbed her fingers over a mark on her wrist. 'But he was stronger?' 'This has never happened to me. It shouldn't have happened.' 'It was not your fault,' Watson said gently. Then tears started flowing from her eyes. 'Afterwards, he shoved me out into the hallway and I asked for my notebook. "Burnt it in the hearth, you little witch. They should do the same with you." I ran. I ran through the woods and hid there. I felt so dirty I was afraid to go home. Me, afraid! A De Bourbon.' 'So you took revenge.' 'My father is working on an automaton. Well, he and his team. During the day, they work at the factory, of course, but my father always takes Claudia home in the evenings. She even has her own room here, silly as that may sound. I borrowed her, that same night, and hid her in the woods on the campus. There's this old hunter's hut, I camouflaged her and waited along her side until night fell. He was coming home, I could hear his crew, rowdy and drunk as usual. He was the loudest of them all. I waited at the edge of the woods, a lantern in my hands, and just beckoned him, that is all. His mates were cheering him on, the bastards.' She shook her head. 'He just went along with me.' Watson had taken off his glasses and rubbed his eyes. He suddenly felt very tired. 'He didn't think you were going to harm him, I suppose.' 'No, it's worse, he didn't think he had harmed me.' Then she smiled, an angelic smile it was too. 'His hands were so big, and hairy, his fingernails had grown overnight. He stroked my cheek and kissed me. I showed him the automaton and said she was a special treat for him. That she was a harlot. He sat down on her lap and grabbed her by the chest, I activated her and she electrocuted him. It was all over very quickly.' 'Thank you for telling me this,' Watson replied to her confession. 'You have been a victim as well as a killer.' At this she rose. 'I am not a victim,' she hissed. 'Right. If you say so.' Watson replied. 'Albescu will be home soon.' she said. 'What am I going to do with you?' 'Please, why don't we talk some more? You have not told me what came next; the mutilation.' 'The what? I just left him there and me and Claudia went home. That's all.' 'He was found on the dissecting table at the morgue that morning. Missing his hands and his incisors.' 'If I would have done any mutilations, it would not have been those body parts.' He believed this immediately. He bowed forward confidentially and said 'You know, I was treating young Harrington. He had a peculiar condition.' 'He's a wolf,

you mean? I know, doctor. I knew all along. I tried to warn the head master, because we all know wolves are nothing but trouble, but he wouldn't listen to me. I think he knew already.' 'But how did you know? before the furry – hands, I mean?' 'That I cannot tell you.' At that point they both heard hoof prints on the gravel. 'Albescu is coming,' she said, and Watson knew this meant Claudia the killer machine was coming too. 'It would be best if you came along to the police.' Watson said perfunctory. 'We will talk about what is best when Albescu is here.' she said icily. They waited like statues and listened as the footsteps in the hall, one pair human, one pair automaton, steadily approached, as the door to the library was opened and as Albescu and Claudia walked in. Claudia was carrying a suitcase in the bend of her arm. This disturbed Watson. She was switched off in a corner of the room, and Albescu introduced himself. 'I've seen you tonight?' he said. 'Yes, my name is Doctor Watson. Impressed by your work.' 'Surely that is not reason you come here?' 'He knows about Harrington's death.' the young lady replied. 'La Naiba!' he cursed. 'This not good,' he then said to Watson. 'I know.' Watson answered drily. 'What we can do for you?' Albescu asked him with a sly smile. 'Err, well, you see, I have been asked to solve this murder, and I think I have done that, so maybe it is better if I leave now?' Watson said. 'But how do we know you are not going to report this to the police? Or worse, to the headmaster? I want to continue my studies! That is important for our future.' Very admirable, this dedication to her studies, if only more young people would feel that way, Watson mused. 'Can you forgive me, doctor Watson?' Vanessa de Bourbon asked. He nodded but then thought of Harrington senior: 'You have robbed a father of his son.' he said softly. 'Doesn't he deserve to know who took him away?' She nodded, he thought to show her agreement, but then he felt Albescu's iron grip on his throat. 'Come now.' Albescu said as he lifted Watson from the chair and took him down the hallway, to a storage closet near the front entrance. 'You wait here,' he said and shoved the poor doctor into the closet, barring the door. Watson sank to his knees in between the table linens. Far away he heard the companions discuss the situation, very heatedly and in a foreign tongue. He checked his pockets. Had he really gone into the house of a killer without bringing a single weapon? He had really, blinded by femininity. This would never have happened to Holmes, he thought. No one would hear him scream. Would they let Claudia do it? Would he be practice material for her? The pungent odour of his own sweat was like a slap in his face. 'Don't panic,' he muttered. He started rhythmically pounding his head onto the door of the closet. When even that didn't do the trick, he screamed on the tops of his lungs: 'I am panicking!' Then he fell out into the hallway, and looked up to see Holmes standing there, smirking. Watson had no idea what it was. 'Right, let's see if we can make some arrests, shall we?' Holmes said. Watson blinked, and soaked in the first rays of daylight. At moments like these he didn't know if Holmes was a lifesaver or a mortal threat to him. Possibly both. 'I notified Mycroft and the chief of police, they have this place surrounded. Really not much to it except saying 'you are under arrest! Well, go on, on your feet!' Watson scrambled up. The two were still arguing, it seemed, but now the voices came from upstairs. They sneaked up the wooden stairs, and found them in the master bedroom, packing their suitcases. Ms de Bourbon already was wearing a very heavy backpack with some metal contraption on it. 'You?' Albescu exclaimed as he saw Holmes. Holmes replied by pouncing the man, which left the girl for Watson. She put up her hands in front of her face and breast area and slowly approached him. He did the same, but hesitated to make the first move. She tried to kick him in his private parts, almost poked her finger in his eye and only when she said, full of contempt 'Are you afraid of a girl?' a remark which acted like a time machine and brought him back in the yard of Graham's Grammar School, only

then did he attack. She was very well versed in the Oriental arts, and it took all he had to take her down. In the brief moment she was lying on the floor, his arm blocking her throat, she suddenly lunged and bit him on his neck. The pain and surprise broke his hold, and she got up, opened the balcony doors, and jumped out, just like that. He ran to the balcony, saw the police cordon, the dogs barking, lights flashing all around the property, but he didn't see her. Then he heard a soft chopping sound and looked up. There Ms de Bourbon went, the engine of her jetpack softly humming in the early morning sky, leaving behind a trail of wispy smoke. She seemed to look at him and threw something down. Right in front of his feet landed her white knickers. Her engine changed gears and she sped away as he absentmindedly picked up her underwear and held it to the small marks on his neck. The satin fabric tainted red, forming two elegant poppies of blood.

Later that morning, Holmes and Watson were enjoying their first cup of tea at 221B Bakerstreet. Albescu and Claudia had been taken by the Metropolitan police force. Ms de Bourbon had not been found. 'Some extra biscuits, Doctor Watson?' Mrs Hudson asked him. 'You are looking a bit pale this morning.' 'It was a long and harrowing night.' 'But I finally got you out of that closet.' Holmes added. 'How did *you* figure out who the killer was?' Watson asked. 'Well, remember that awful coach we took along with the students? I exchanged my own bank notes for those of Ms de Bourbon. I used some pencil shavings to trace her fingerprints on those notes, when I got to the Tower. And then I compared them with those on the candle from Harrington's bedroom.' 'I see.' 'But how on earth did *you* figure it out, all by yourself?' Holmes returned the question. 'Don't look so surprised,' Watson said proudly. 'I recognised Ms de Bourbon's voice: that killer robot spoke in exactly the same way.' 'Well, everyone could have done that.' Holmes said coolly and took a sip of his tea. Watson's smile vanished and he pondered the view from the window. It had turned grey and stormy, but still he found that he had to squeeze his eyes against the daylight. 'But neither of us has yet worked out who moved the body to the morgue, and who mutilated it,' he said pensively. Holmes took the biscuit from his saucer and threw it at the wall before replying. 'Head master Trollope gave the orders, Walker performed the post-mortem surgery. The head master was very concerned that the presence of a werewolf among the students would have a detrimental effect on the amount of applications to his school. He couldn't resist taking on the boy in the first place, of course, because of his father, investments, vanity, ambition, et cetera.' 'But how? When?' 'I sent my dear brother Moriarty a telegram first thing this morning, right before rescuing you, asking him to drop by the head master's office, tell him who the murderer was and elicit a confession from him. He didn't even have to put pressure on him, the man broke down immediately.' 'So Harrington senior was completely innocent after all,' Watson mused. 'Of this particular crime, yes.' They drank their tea and looked at the English drizzle. The window started fogging up on the inside, and on the cold glass appeared a little drawing of a stick figure hanging from the gallows. Holmes smiled and said: 'It looks like we have a new case on our hands.'