something to do with it. They are close friends of the old doctor, and the doctor may want to stop his stepdaughter's marriage. Then we must think about the whistles and the speckled band. But what . . . !'

These last words were spoken because our door had suddenly been pushed open and a very large man had appeared in the room. His clothes were a strange mix. He had on the black hat and long black coat of a professional man, but his trousers were the type that you would see on a farmer. He had a thick walking stick in his hand.

His large face was very lined, burned yellow by the sun. He turned his hate-filled eyes from one to the other of us.

'Which of you is Holmes?' he asked.

'That is my name, sir,' said Holmes, 'And you are . . . ?'

'I am Dr Grimesby Roylott of Stoke Moran.'

'Really?' said Holmes quietly. 'Please take a seat.'

'No, I will not. My daughter has been here. What has she been saying to you?'

'It is a little cold for this time of year,' Holmes said.

'What has she been saying to you?' screamed the old man, now very angry.

'But the flowers are starting to appear,' continued Holmes.

'Ha! You refuse to answer?' said our new visitor, taking a step forward and waving his stick in the air. 'I know you, you troublemaker! You are Holmes, the man who cannot keep his nose out of other people's business.' My friend smiled. 'Holmes, the man who pretends to be a policeman!'

Holmes laughed loudly. 'Your conversation is very entertaining,' he said. 'When you leave, please close the door.'

'I will leave when I have said what I want to say. Stay away from my business. I know that Miss Stoner has been here – I had her followed! I am a dangerous man! Look.' He stepped quickly forward, picked up the poker, and bent it into a curve with his

large brown hands. Then, throwing the poker into the fireplace, he marched out of the room.

'He seems to be a very nice man,' Holmes said, laughing. 'I am not quite so big, but I think my strength is almost as great as his.' As he spoke, he picked up the poker. With a sudden pull on each end, he straightened it again.

'This makes the whole case more interesting,' he added. 'I only hope that our little friend will not suffer because she came here. And now, Watson, we shall order breakfast, and afterwards I shall go to the records office. I hope to get some useful information there.'

It was nearly one o'clock when Sherlock Holmes returned. He held in his hand a sheet of blue paper, with notes and figures written on it.

'I have seen the will of the dead wife,' he said. 'There is a large sum of money which, eight years ago, produced about £1,100 a year. Now, because of the fall in farming prices, the amount is probably less than £750. And when a daughter marries, she will receive £250 a year.

'So, if both girls – or even one girl – married, there would be little money for him. My morning's work has not been wasted. He has very strong reasons for stopping their marriages.

'Watson, this is very serious, and the old man knows that we are interested in his business. If you are ready, we will call a carriage and drive to Waterloo. Please bring your revolver. It may be necessary to use it.'

At Waterloo we caught a train for Leatherhead, where we hired a carriage at the station inn. We drove through the lovely Surrey country roads. It was a perfect day, with a bright sun and a few light clouds in the sky. The trees were just beginning to show their new leaves, and the air was full of the pleasant smell of the wet earth. There was a big difference between the beauty of the spring and the dark business which had brought us here.

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My friend sat in the front of the carriage, thinking hard. His hat was pulled down over his eyes, and his chin was on his chest. Suddenly, however, he sat up, touched me on the shoulder, and pointed over the fields at a large, very old grey house.

'Look there,' he said. 'Stoke Moran.'

'Yes sir, that is the house of Dr Grimesby Roylott,' said the driver.

'There is some building work there,' said Holmes. 'That is where we are going.'

'There's the village,' said the driver, pointing to a group of roofs a little way away, 'but the footpath through the fields is quicker. There it is, where the lady is walking.'

'And the lady, I think, is Miss Stoner,' said Holmes.

We got off, and paid our fare, and the carriage turned back on its way to Leatherhead.

'I thought,' said Holmes, 'that the driver should think we had come here as builders, or on some definite business. It may stop him talking. Good afternoon, Miss Stoner.'

Our visitor of the morning hurried forward to meet us. 'I've been waiting for you,' she cried, shaking hands with us warmly. 'Everything is going well. Dr Roylott has gone to London and is unlikely to be back before evening.'

'We have already met the doctor,' said Holmes, and in a few words he told her what had happened.

Miss Stoner turned white as she listened.

'Oh no!' she cried. 'He has followed me, then?'

'You must lock yourself away from him tonight. If he is violent, we shall take you away to your aunt's at Harrow. Now, we must make the best use of our time. Please take us to the rooms which we need to examine.'

The house was built of grey stone, with a central part and two curving side parts. The windows on one side were broken, and covered with wooden boards. The central part was in better

condition, but the part on the right-hand side was quite modern. This was where the family lived.

Some building work was being done on the end wall, but there were no workmen at the time of our visit. Holmes carefully examined the outsides of the windows.

'This, I believe, belongs to your old room, the centre one to your sister's, and the one next to the main building belongs to Dr Roylott's bedroom?'

'Yes, but I am now sleeping in the middle room.'

'Because of the building work, as I understand. I can see no great need for repairs to that end wall.'

'The work is unnecessary. I believe that it is an excuse to move me from my room.'

'Ah! That is interesting. Now, would you please go into your room, and lock the shutters.'

Miss Stoner did so. Holmes took out a knife and tried to force the shutter open, but without success.

'Hmm,' he said. 'No one could get through these shutters if the iron bars were in place, locking them. Well, perhaps the inside of the room will give us some ideas.'

A small side-door led into the white painted passage. We went first into the middle room, where Miss Stoner was now sleeping.

It was quite small, with a low ceiling and a wide fireplace. A brown chest of drawers stood in one corner, a narrow bed in another, and a table on the left-hand side of the window. The only other furniture was two small chairs.

The walls were covered with wood, which looked about the same age as the house. Holmes pulled one of the chairs into a corner and sat silently. His eyes moved around, examining every detail of the room.

'When that bell rings, who answers it?' he asked at last. He pointed to a thick bell rope which hung down beside the bed. The end of it was actually lying on the pillow.

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'It goes to the servant's room.'

'It looks newer than everything else in the room.'

'Yes, it was only put there two years ago.'

'Your sister asked for it, I suppose?'

'No, she never used it. When we wanted something, we got it ourselves.'

'Then it does not seem necessary to have such a nice bell rope there. Please excuse me for a few minutes while I look at this floor.'

He lay face-down and examined the spaces between the boards. Then he did the same with the wood around the walls. He walked to the bed and stared at it. Finally, he took the bell rope in his hand and pulled it.

'It is not a real bell!' he said. 'This is very interesting. It is fixed to the wall just above the ventilator.'

'How silly! I have never noticed that before.'

'Very strange!' said Holmes quietly, pulling at the rope. 'There are one or two unusual things about this room. For example, why does that ventilator go into another room, when it could open to the outside air?'

'That is also quite modern,' the lady said.

'Was it put in at about the same time as the bell rope?' Holmes asked.

'Yes, there were several little changes at that time.'

'Bell ropes which do not pull, and ventilators which do not ventilate. Now, with your permission, Miss Stoner, we will move next door.'

Dr Roylott's room was larger than Helen's, but it also had little furniture in it. There was a bed, a small wooden shelf of books, an armchair beside the bed, a plain wooden chair against the wall, a round table, and a large iron box. Holmes walked slowly round and round, examining everything with great interest.

'What is in here?' he asked, touching the box.

'My stepfather's business papers.'

'Oh! You have seen inside?'

'Only once. Some years ago. I remember it was full of papers.'

'There is not a cat in it, for example?'

'No. What a strange idea!'

'Well, look at this!' He picked up a small bowl of milk which was on top of it.

'No, we do not keep a cat, but there are some larger animals around.'

'Ah yes, of course. But this is a very small bowl. Now, I would like to check one thing.'

He bent down in front of the wooden chair, and examined it closely.

'Thank you. That is fine,' he said, standing up straight again. 'Ah! Here is something interesting.'

He had seen a small dog lead, hanging on one corner of the bed. The end of it was tied in a small circle.

'What do you think of that, Watson?'

'It is an ordinary lead. But I do not know why it is tied.'

'That is not so normal, is it? Well, I think I have seen enough now, Miss Stoner. With your permission, we shall walk in the garden again.'

When we left the room, my friend's face was more serious than I have ever seen it. We walked several times up and down the garden before he spoke.

'Miss Stoner, you must follow my advice completely. If you do not, you may die.'

'I shall do what you want me to do.'

'First, my friend and I must spend the night in your room.'

Both Miss Stoner and I looked at him in surprise.

'Yes, we must. Let me explain. I believe that is the village inn over there?'

'Yes, that is the Crown.'

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'Very good. Your windows can be seen from there?'

'Certainly.'

'You must stay in your room when your stepfather comes back. When he goes to his room for the night, you must open the shutters of your window and put your lamp there so we can see it. Then you must go into your old bedroom. I am sure that you can manage there for one night.'

'Oh, yes, easily.'

'We will spend the night in your room. We will try to discover the reason for the noise that you have heard.'

'I believe, Mr Holmes, that you already know the answer,' said Miss Stoner, placing her hand on my friend's arm.

'Perhaps I do.'

'Then please tell me the cause of my sister's death.'

'I would prefer to be more certain before I speak.'

'Do you think she died of fear?'

'No, I do not think so. I think there was probably a more real cause. And now, Miss Stoner, we must leave you. If Dr Roylott returned and saw us, our journey would be for nothing. Goodbye, and be brave.'

Sherlock Holmes and I took a bedroom and a sitting-room at the Crown Inn. They were upstairs on the first floor, and from our window we could see the house quite easily. Early in the evening we saw Dr Roylott drive past in a carriage. A few minutes later, there was a sudden light among the trees as the lamp was lit in one of the sitting-rooms.

'Watson,' said Holmes, as we sat together in the growing darkness, 'I am unsure about taking you tonight. I think there may be some danger.'

'Can I help?'

'You might be very useful.'

'Then I shall certainly come. I think you saw more in those rooms than I could see.'

'Well, I knew that we would find a ventilator before we even came to the house.'

'My dear Holmes!'

'Oh, yes, I did. Helen Stoner said that her sister could smell the smoke of Dr Roylott's cigarettes. That, of course, suggested that there must be an opening between the two rooms. It could only be a small one, because the police did not report it. It had to be a ventilator.'

'But is that important?'

'Don't you think it is strange?' Holmes asked me. 'A ventilator is put in, a bell rope is hung, and the lady in the bed dies. Did you notice that the bed was fixed to the floor? The lady could not move her bed. It had to stay there – near the bell rope, and under the ventilator.'

'Holmes,' I cried, 'I am beginning to understand! We must stop a clever and horrible crime.'

'Yes, when a doctor becomes a criminal, he is the worst of criminals. He has all the knowledge that is necessary for murder. I think we may have a terrible night ahead of us. For the moment, let us have a quiet pipe and try to think about something more cheerful.'

At about nine o'clock, the light among the trees went out, and the house went dark. Two hours passed slowly, and then, suddenly, a single bright light shone out.

'That is our sign,' said Holmes, jumping to his feet. 'It comes from the middle window.'

A moment later, we were out on the dark road. When we got near the house, we left the road and walked through the trees. We reached the garden, walked quietly through it and climbed into the bedroom. Holmes silently closed the shutters. Then he moved the lamp on to the table and looked around the room. It seemed just the same as before.

He came close to me and, speaking in a whisper, said, 'The

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smallest sound could ruin all our plans. We must sit without a light. He would see it through the ventilator. Do not go to sleep. Your life may be in danger. Have your revolver ready. I will sit on the side of the bed, and you in that chair.'

I took out my revolver and put it on the corner of the table. Holmes had brought a long thin stick, and he placed this on the bed beside him. Near it he put a box of matches and the end of a candle. Then he turned down the lamp and we were left in the dark.

How shall I ever forget the terrible hours that followed? Sometimes, from outside, we heard the cry of a night bird, and the church clock struck every quarter of an hour. Twelve o'clock passed, and one, and two, and three. We still sat silently, waiting for something to happen.

Suddenly, a light shone for a moment in the direction of the ventilator. It disappeared immediately, but it was followed by a strong smell of burning oil and heated metal. Someone in the next room had lit a small lamp. I heard a gentle sound of movement, and then everything was silent again, though the smell grew stronger.

For half an hour I sat listening. Then I heard something else – a very gentle sound like steam escaping from a pot. Holmes jumped from the bed and lit the candle. Then he struck wildly with his stick at the bell rope.

'Can you see it, Watson?' he shouted. 'Can you see it?'

But I saw nothing. When Holmes struck the match, I heard a low clear whistle. But the sudden light made it impossible to see what my friend was striking. I could, however, see that his face was pale and filled with horror.

Holmes had now put down his stick, and he was looking up at the ventilator. Then came the most horrible cry I have ever heard. It was a scream of pain and anger, and it grew louder and louder. They say that, down in the village, sleepers jumped from



Then he struck wildly with his stick at the bell rope.

their beds. I stood staring at Holmes, and he at me, until it stopped.

'What does that mean?' I said.

'It means that it is finished,' Holmes answered. 'And perhaps it is the best thing that could happen. Take your revolver, and we will enter Dr Roylott's room.'

Holmes lit the lamp, and led the way down the passage. Twice he knocked on the door of the room, but there was no reply. Then he turned the handle and entered. I was just behind him, with the revolver in my hand.

On the table stood a small lamp. The iron box was open and near it, on the wooden chair, sat Dr Grimesby Roylott. On his knees lay the dog lead which we had noticed earlier. Dr Roylott's eyes were fixed in a terrible stare. Round his head there was a strange yellow band with brown spots.

'The band! The speckled band!' whispered Holmes.

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I took a step forward. The band moved, and I saw it was a snake.

'That is the most dangerous type of snake in India!' Holmes cried. 'He died seconds after it bit him.'

As he spoke, he took the dog lead quickly from the dead man's knees, put the circle round the snake's head, and threw it into the iron box.

These are the true facts of the death of Dr Grimesby Roylott of Stoke Moran. We told the news to the sad girl, then took her by the morning train to her aunt in Harrow. We then called the police. They decided that the doctor had died while playing with a dangerous pet.

On the train the next day, Sherlock Holmes told me the facts that I still had to learn about the case.

'At first,' he said, 'I had completely the wrong idea. I thought the dead girl meant a "band" of travelling people. However, when I saw that nobody could get into that room through the window or the door, I had to think again.

'There were three strange things in the room – the ventilator the bell rope and the bed. I decided that the rope might be a bridge for something that passed through the ventilator to the bed.

'The idea of a snake came to me because I knew that the doctor had a number of animals from India. He is also a doctor, and has worked in India, so he would know about poison that is not discovered by any test. Another advantage of a snake is the speed with which the poison works. No policeman would notice the two little holes where it went in.

'Then I thought of the whistle. Of course, he had to get the snake back before daylight. He had taught it, possibly using the bowl of milk, to return to him when he whistled. So every night, very late, he put it through the ventilator. It climbed down the rope and landed on the bed. It might or might not bite the

sleeping girl. Perhaps she might escape every night for a week, but sooner or later it would kill her.

'I decided all this before I even entered his room. I examined his chair and saw that he had often stood on it. He used it, of course, to reach the ventilator. When I saw the iron box, the bowl of milk and the dog lead, I was sure that I had the right idea. Miss Stoner had spoken about the sound of falling metal. That was when the doctor quickly shut the iron box after he had put the snake inside.

'So then we had to see if I was right. When I heard a hissing sound, I knew that the snake was coming through. I quickly lit the candle and attacked it.'

'And it went back through the ventilator.'

'Yes, and then it bit Dr Roylott. I am responsible for his death, but I do not feel very guilty about that.'

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The Five Orange Pips

When I look back over my records of Sherlock Holmes's cases between the years 1882 and 1890, I find many that were strange and interesting. It is difficult to know which cases to include here. Some have already been reported in the newspapers, and others did not allow my friend to show his very special abilities. There are others which he could not solve or which never completely satisfied him. One of these cases was very unusual in its details. I will tell what I know of the story.

It began on an evening in September 1887, during a very violent autumn storm. All day the wind had screamed and the rain had beaten against the windows. As evening came, the storm grew louder and louder, and the wind cried like a child in the chimney.

Sherlock Holmes walked up and down, checking records of his past cases. I sat at the desk, organising some medical notes. My wife was visiting her aunt, and for a few days I was living in my old rooms in Baker Street.

'Was that the door bell?' I said, looking up at my friend. 'Who would come tonight?'

'If someone needs my help, it must be a serious case,' Holmes agreed.

At that moment, there was a knock at the door. Holmes turned a lamp towards the chair on which the visitor would sit.

'Come in!' he said.

The man was young, perhaps twenty-two years old or less, and well dressed. His wet umbrella and his long shining raincoat showed the wild weather that he had come through. He looked around anxiously in the bright light of the lamp, and I could see

that his face was pale and his eyes were heavy. He was a very worried man.

'I must ask you to forgive me for visiting you so late,' he said, putting on a pair of gold glasses. 'I am sorry, too, that I have brought some of the bad weather into this warm room.'

'You have come from Sussex, I see,' Holmes said.

'Yes, from Horsham.'

'That mud on your shoes is quite typical of the area.'

'I have come for advice.'

'That is easy.'

'And help.'

'That is not always so easy.'

'I have heard of you, Mr Holmes. I heard from Captain Prendergast how you saved him in that business at the Tankerville Club.'

'Ah, of course. They said that he cheated at cards. They were wrong.'

'He said that you could solve anything – that you are never beaten.'

'I have been beaten – three times by men and once by a woman. But it is true that I have generally been successful. Please pull your chair closer to the fire, and tell me some details of your case.'

'It is not an ordinary one.'

'I expected that. People come to me after they have tried everything else. They do not bring me ordinary cases. Now, please give us the facts from the beginning.'

The young man moved his chair and pushed his wet feet out towards the fire.

'My name,' he said, 'is John Openshaw, but this awful business is a family matter. To give you an idea of the facts, I must go back to the beginning.

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'My grandfather had two sons – my uncle Elias and my father Joseph. My father had a small factory in Coventry. He made parts for bicycles, and was successful. After some years he sold the business for quite a lot of money.

'My uncle Elias went to America when he was a young man, and became a planter in Florida. At the time of the war between the northern and southern states, he fought in Jackson's army. When the South was beaten, he returned to Florida and stayed there for three or four years. In about 1869 or 1870, he came back to Europe and bought some land in Sussex, near Horsham. He had made a lot of money in the United States, but he left because black people had been allowed to vote. He did not like that.

'He was an unusual man, often angry and bad-tempered, and he did not seem to like other people. He lived near Horsham for years, but I do not think that he ever went into the town. He had a garden and two or three fields around the house. He took his exercise there, though very often he did not leave his room for several weeks. He drank a lot and smoked very heavily, and he did not want any friends, not even his own brother.

'But he seemed to like me. I first saw him when I was only about twelve. I think that was in the year 1878 – he had been in England for eight or nine years. He asked my father to let me come and live with him, and he was very kind to me in his way. I spoke to other people for him, and at sixteen I was almost completely in charge of the house. I kept all the keys and looked after the money. I could go where I liked and do what I liked.

'There was only one place where I was not allowed to go. That was a locked room at the top of the house. Because I was like any other boy, I looked through the keyhole, but I was only able to see a collection of old boxes.

'One day – in March 1883 – a letter with a foreign stamp lay on the table in front of Uncle Elias's plate. He did not often

receive letters, because his bills were paid in cash and he had no friends.

'"From India!" he said, as he picked it up. "Pondicherry postmark! What can this be?" He opened the letter and out fell five little seeds – orange pips. I began to laugh at this, but my laugh died at the sight of his face. His lip had fallen, his eyes stared and his skin turned pale. He held the letter in a shaking hand. "K.K.K!" he cried, and then: "My God, my God! My past has found me."

'"What is it, uncle?" I cried.

'"Death!" he said. Then he got up from the table and left the room, leaving me puzzled and very afraid. I picked up the envelope. Inside, in red ink, the letter "K" was written three times. There was nothing else except the five dried pips. What could the reason be for his great terror? I left the breakfast table and met him coming downstairs. He had a large key in one hand and a small box, like a cash box, in the other.

'"They can do what they like, but I will win in the end," he said angrily. "Tell Mary" – she was his servant – "that I shall want a fire in my room today, and send for Fordham, my lawyer."

'I did as he ordered. When the lawyer arrived, I asked him to come up to the room. The fire was burning brightly and all around it there were black pieces of burnt paper. The small box stood open and empty beside it. As I looked at the box I noticed, with surprise, that there were three Ks printed on it.

'"I want you, John," my uncle said, "to witness my will. I am leaving my house and my land, with all its advantages and disadvantages, to my brother, your father. When he dies it will, no doubt, come to you. If you can enjoy my money in peace, that is good! If you cannot, leave everything to your worst enemy. I do not know what is going to happen. Please sign the paper where Mr Fordham shows you."

'I signed the will and the lawyer took it away with him. This

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strange event puzzled me. I could not escape from a feeling of fear, though this grew less strong as the weeks passed and nothing happened to affect our lives.

'But I could see a change in my uncle. He drank more than before, and he spent most of the time in his room, with the door locked on the inside. Sometimes he got drunk and ran around the garden with a gun in his hand, shouting that he was afraid of nobody. Then he rushed back into the house, locking the door behind him.

'Well, one night he ran out of the house like this, but he never came back. When we went to search for him, we found him face downwards in a small lake at the bottom of the garden. There was no sign of a fight, and the water was only two feet deep.

'He was dead, and the police believed that he had killed himself. He had behaved strangely for months. But I did not believe this. I knew how much he was afraid of death. Time passed, however, and my father now owned the house, the land, and fourteen thousand pounds in the bank.'

'One moment,' Holmes said. 'Your story is one of the strangest I have ever heard. When did your uncle receive the letter, and when did he die?'

'The letter arrived on 10th March, 1883. His death was seven weeks later, on the night of May 2nd.'

'Thank you. Please continue.'

'When my father first came to the house, I asked him to examine the room which had always been kept locked. We found the small box there, but it was empty except for one piece of paper. It had the letters K.K.K. on it, and the words "Letters, receipts and list of members".

'These were probably the papers that my uncle destroyed. There was nothing else important in the room – only papers and notebooks connected with my uncle's life in America. Some of these showed that he had been a good soldier during the war.

Others, from after this time, were about politics. They showed that he had been strongly against the politicians who had been sent down from the North.

'Well, my father came to live at Horsham in 1884, and all went well until January of 1885. On the fourth day after New Year, I heard a shout of surprise from my father. He was sitting at the breakfast table with an open envelope in one hand and five dried orange pips in the other. He had always laughed at my story about Uncle Elias, but now he looked very puzzled and frightened.

'"What does this mean, John?" he whispered.

'"It is the K.K.K," I said. I was frightened too.

'He looked inside the envelope. "Yes, here are the same letters. But what is written above them?"

'"Put the papers on the stone seat," I read, looking over his shoulder.

'"What papers? What stone seat?" he asked.

'"The stone seat in the garden? But the papers have been destroyed."

'"This is rubbish," he said, beginning to sound braver. "This sort of thing does not happen in this country. Where does this letter come from?"

'"From Dundee," I answered, looking at the postmark.

'"A stupid joke," he said. "Why should they write to me about stone seats and papers?"

'"I think you should speak to the police," I said.

'"They will laugh at me. No, I can't do that."

'"Then let me speak to them."

'"No, let's not do anything."

'I could not change his mind, but I was very worried about the letter.

'Three days later, my father decided to visit a friend who lived a few miles away. I was happy about this, because I thought that

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