



*There I sat and tried to read a book. But my thoughts kept returning to the Boscombe Pool mystery. Finally I threw the book across the room.*

It was late before Sherlock Holmes returned. He came back alone because Lestrade was staying at a different hotel. I told him about the head wounds, a fact which he seemed to find interesting.

'The weather seems to be staying fine,' he said. 'We don't want any rain to fall before we can look at the ground. But we must rest and be fresh for important work of this kind. I did not want to begin it after that long journey. I have seen young McCarthy.'

'And what did you learn from him?'

'Nothing.'

'Couldn't he tell you anything?'

'Nothing, as I have said. At first, I thought that he must know the name of the murderer. He wanted to save him or her – that was my idea. But now I am sure that he knows as little as we do. I must say that he is not a very intelligent young man, even if he is good-looking and also, I think, good-hearted.'

'I do not think much of his taste,' I said, 'if he really does not want to marry Miss Turner.'

'Ah, that is a long, sad story. This boy is deeply in love with her. But two years ago he did a very stupid thing. Miss Turner was still at school then and away from home. He did not know her very well. James became friendly with a woman in Bristol who worked in a bar. He married her secretly. Even now, no one knows that he is married. So think of his feelings when his father told him again and again to marry Miss Turner! He dearly wanted to marry her but he knew that it was impossible. His father, as we now know, was a cold, hard man and James could not tell him about his wife. He has spent the last three days in Bristol with this bar woman and his father of course knew nothing about it. Remember that fact. It is very important. But something good has happened at last, because his wife has now left him. She read in the newspaper about his serious trouble and wants to have nothing more to do with him. She has written to say that she has



*'I have seen young McCarthy. But now I am sure he knows as little as we do,' said Holmes.*

a husband already – a sailor – and that she and James are not really married. This piece of news has made poor James a lot happier.'

'But if James is innocent, then who did the murder?'

'Ah, who? I want you to notice two important facts. The first is that the murdered man went to the pool to meet someone. This person was not his son, because his son was away from home. McCarthy did not know when his son was coming back. The second fact is that the murdered man called "Cooee!", not knowing about his son's return. Those are the two things which will help to save young James. And now let us change the subject. We shall talk no more of murders and leave all that business until tomorrow.'

Holmes was right: there was no rain during the night and the next day was bright and cloudless. At nine o'clock Lestrade came for us with the carriage and we left for Hatherley Farm and Boscombe Valley.

'There is serious news this morning,' said Lestrade; 'I hear that Mr Turner is dangerously ill. The doctor thinks that he is dying.'

'He is quite an old man, then?' asked Holmes.

'About sixty; but his health has been bad for some time. This business has made him really ill. He was an old friend of McCarthy's and helped him in a number of ways. I have learned that he gave him free use of Hatherley Farm.'

'Is that true? This is most interesting,' said Holmes.

'Oh yes, and he has helped him in other ways too. Everyone round here speaks of his kindness to McCarthy.'

'Really? Don't you think it strange then that McCarthy wanted his son to marry Turner's daughter? The Turners are rich and the McCarthys seem to be quite poor. We know that old Mr Turner has always been against the idea. His daughter told us that. Don't you find that McCarthy's friendliness is a little unusual?'

'You are always full of ideas, Mr Holmes,' said Lestrade, looking at me with a smile. 'I have come here to study the facts and they are difficult enough. Your thoughts always fly away from the real problems.'

'You are right,' said Holmes quietly. 'You do find it difficult to notice the facts.'

'Well, I have understood one fact which you do not seem to get hold of,' answered Lestrade, not very pleased.

'And that is?'

'That young McCarthy killed his father; any other way of seeing this case is just not possible.'

'Let us agree to disagree,' said Holmes, laughing. 'But if I am not mistaken, there is Hatherley Farm on the left.'

‘Yes, that is it.’

It was a long, low building made of grey stone and it looked comfortable. But the windows were all shut and there was no smoke coming up from the roof. It looked empty. We knocked on the door and a young servant girl came out. She showed us first the boots which old Mr McCarthy was wearing at the time of his death. She also showed us a pair of the son’s boots. Holmes studied their size and shape very carefully. He then asked to see the back of the house. From there we took the path which went to Boscombe Pool.

Holmes seemed to change as he hurried towards the place of the murder. He stopped being the quiet thinker of Baker Street. His face became redder and darker. His eyes shone with a hard light. He pressed his lips together and held his face down and his body low, studying the ground. His thoughts were turned so fully to the case that he did not seem to hear anything that we said. If he did, he answered only with a short word or two. He made his way quickly and silently along the path which went across the fields and then down through the trees to Boscombe Pool.

The ground was soft and wet as we got nearer. There were the marks of many feet both on the path and on the short grass on each side. Sometimes Holmes hurried on, sometimes he suddenly stood still. Once he walked away from the path into a field. Lestrade and I walked behind him. Lestrade seemed bored and uninterested in what Holmes was doing but I watched my friend carefully, knowing that every movement had a meaning.

Boscombe Pool is a small piece of water about one hundred and twenty yards wide. It lies at the end of the Hatherley Farm land where it joins the beautiful park land belonging to Mr Turner. Above the trees on the far side of the pool we could see the big red roofs of Turner’s home. On the Hatherley



*Holmes studied the size and shape of the boots very carefully.*



*Holmes ran here and there like a dog which has smelled a wild animal.*

side of the pool the trees grew thick. There was a narrow piece of open ground about forty yards wide between the trees and the water of the lake. This open part was covered with short, wet grass. Lestrade showed us the place where the body was lying when they found it. In fact, the ground was so soft that I could see the marks left by McCarthy's fall. But, looking at Holmes, I realized from his excited face and the quick movement of his eyes that he was learning many other things from the marks on the grass. He ran here and there like a dog which has smelled a wild animal. Then he turned to the detective.

'Why did you go into the pool?' he asked Lestrade.

'I thought that maybe there was a gun or a piece of clothing or something like that in the water. But tell me, how...?'

'Oh come now, Lestrade. I have no time. That left foot of yours is everywhere. A child can see it. Look over there, where it disappears into the grass. This case was perfectly easy until a crowd of people came and stupidly walked all over the place. Here is where the Morans came and their footmarks have covered the ground for five or six yards around the body. But here are three different lines of the same feet.'

He took out a magnifying glass and lay down on top of his coat to see the marks better. Talking to himself more than to us, he said, 'These are young McCarthy's feet. Twice he was walking and once he was running fast, because his toes are pressing deeper into the ground. That follows his story, does it not? Then here are the father's footmarks as he walked up and down. What is this, then? Ha, ha! What have we here? Someone walking on his toes. In boots with square toes too. Quite unusual boots. They come, they go, they come again – of course, that was for the coat. Now, where did they come from?'



*He lay down and studied the ground with his magnifying glass.*

He ran up and down, sometimes losing and sometimes finding the line of footmarks. Soon we were standing in the shadow of a very big tree, the largest of them all. Holmes followed the marks to the far side of the tree. Then he lay down on his front again with an excited shout. For a long time, he stayed there, turning over the dry leaves until he picked up something small, which looked burned. He put this into an envelope. Next, he studied both the ground and the sides of the tree with his magnifying glass. A big rough stone was lying among the leaves. He looked at this too with great interest and kept it. Then he followed another line of footmarks. These went along a path through the trees until they came to a road; where the marks disappeared.

‘It has been a most interesting case,’ Holmes said, becoming himself again. ‘I think that this little house on the right must be the Morans’ home. I will go in and have a word with Mr Moran.



*A big rough stone was lying among the leaves. Holmes looked at this with interest and kept it.*

Perhaps I will write a short letter. After that we shall drive back to the town and have lunch. Please walk to the carriage. I shall be with you again in ten minutes.'

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Ten minutes later, we were in the carriage, driving back to Ross. Holmes was still carrying with him the stone, found among the trees. 'You will be interested in this,' he said to Lestrade, holding it out.

'I see no marks on it.'

'There are none.'

'How do you know that it is important, then?'

'The grass was growing under it. Clearly it was lying there for only a day or two. I could not find the place that it came from: there are too many stones around. But it is the right shape to make the wounds in McCarthy's head.'

'And the murderer?'

'He is a tall man, left-handed, with a bad right leg. He wears thick shooting boots and a grey coat, smokes Indian cigars, uses a cigar-holder and carries a pocket-knife – not a very sharp one. There is more information that I can give you; but that will be enough for you to find him, I think.'

Lestrade laughed. 'I am afraid I find all this hard to believe,' he said. 'This information is all very well but it does not show that a person is guilty of murder.'

'We shall see,' said Holmes. 'You work in your way and I shall work in mine. I shall be busy this afternoon and I shall probably go back to London on the evening train.'

'And leave the case unfinished?'

'No, finished.'

'But the mystery?'

'Is a mystery no more.'

'Who was the guilty person then?'

'Oh, God help us! The person I have just described, of course.'