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has to please a young woman and this one knows what she wants. She has heard of you and she decided to ask you to come. I told her again and again that there is nothing that you can do which I have not already done but . . . Look, here is her carriage at the door!

As he was speaking, a young woman hurried into the room: She was one of the prettiest girls that I have ever seen in my life. Her eyes were shining, her lips open, ready to speak, and her face was pink with excitement.

She looked at each of us carefully, and then turned to my friend. 'Oh Mr Sherlock Holmes,' she said. She seemed to know immediately who he was. 'I am so glad that you have come. I have driven here to tell you this: I know that James did not do it. I know it and I want you to know it too. Please be

quite sure of that fact before you start your work. I have known him since we were both little children and I know his weaknesses better than anyone. But he is too soft-hearted to hurt a fly. Anyone who really knows him must believe that he is innocent.'

'I hope that we can show that to be true, Miss Turner,' said Sherlock Holmes. 'Believe me, I shall do everything possible.'

'But you have read the facts. You have studied the problem. You must see something wrong in what people are thinking. Some way of escape. Do you not believe that he is innocent?'

'I think that probably he is.'

'There, now!' she said, throwing back her head and turning to Lestrade. 'Do you hear that? He gives me hope.'

Lestrade looked unhappy. He clearly thought that Holmes was mistaken. 'I am afraid that my friend here is only guessing,' he said.

'But he is right! I know that he is right. James and his father had many quarrels about me. Mr McCarthy wanted us to get married. I have always loved James and he loves me but we are like brother and sister. He is still young and knows very little about life and . . . and . . . I mean, naturally he did not wish to marry just yet. So there were quarrels. I am sure that this was one of them.'

'And your father?' asked Holmes. 'Did he also want you to marry James?'

'No, he was against it too. Only Mr McCarthy wanted it.' Holmes was watching her carefully and we saw that her face suddenly became a deeper pink.

'Thank you for this information,' Holmes said. 'Can I come and visit your father tomorrow?'

'I am afraid that the doctor will say no.'

'The doctor?'

'Yes, haven't you heard? My poor father has not been strong



for many years but with his sadness about this murder he has become very ill. He is in bed and Dr Willows says that his case is serious. Mr McCarthy was the only person left who knew Father in the old days in Australia – when he was in Victoria.'

'Ha! In Victoria? That is important.'

'Yes, at the mines.'

'Of course. I understand that those were the goldmines where Mr Turner made his money.'

'That is right.'

'Thank you, Miss Turner. You have been a very great help to me.'

'You will tell me tomorrow if you have any news? I expect that you will go to the prison to see James. Oh Mr Holmes, if you do go, please tell him this: I know he is innocent.'

'I will, Miss Turner.'

'I must go home now because my father needs me. He is unhappy if I leave him. Goodbye and God help you in your work.' She hurried from the room and we heard her carriage moving away down the street.

'I am surprised at you, Holmes,' said Lestrade, after keeping silent for a few minutes. 'Why do you give her hope when she is sure to lose it only too soon? I am not soft-hearted, as you know, but I think you are being unkind.'

'I believe that there is a way of saving James McCarthy,' said Holmes. 'Have you an order to see him in the prison?'

'Yes, but only for you and me.'

'Then I shall change my plans and go out. We have still got time to take a train to Hereford and see him tonight?'

'Plenty of time.'

'Then let us go. Watson, I am afraid that you will be bored but I shall only be away for an hour or two.'

I walked with them to the station and then came back alone

through the streets of the little town to our hotel. There I sat and tried to read a book. But the story was so stupid that my thoughts kept returning to the Boscombe Pool mystery. I could not follow the story. Finally, I threw the book across the room and began to think only about the happenings of the day. Perhaps this unlucky young man's words were really true? In that case, what terrible thing happened between the time that he left his father and the time that he ran back to the pool, hearing his dying screams? Something very frightening, I was sure. But what was it? Maybe the shape of the wounds had something to tell me, as a doctor. I rang the bell and asked for the weekly newspaper, which had a description of them. The wounds were in a group on the back part of McCarthy's head, on the left side. Clearly the murderer hit him from behind. This fact made James McCarthy's story easier to believe, perhaps. They were face to face during their quarrel, he said. Of course, it was also possible that James hit him when his father turned his back. Still, I decided to give Holmes this information. Then there was the strange talk of a rat when the old man lay dying. It is unusual for a dying man to use words with no meaning. Probably he was trying to explain how it all happened. But what did it mean? I thought hard, trying to find an answer to the mystery; but I could not. Then there was the grey cloth which young McCarthy saw. If this was true, then perhaps the murderer dropped it – his coat maybe – when he was running away. But the son was sitting beside his father, just a few yards away and saw no one. So every part of the case seemed to bring more problems. Lestrade's ideas did not surprise me but I believed strongly in my friend Sherlock Holmes. 'He will find new facts,' I thought to myself, 'and I need not lose hope if each new fact points to young McCarthy's innocence.'







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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