

My First Meeting with Sherlock Holmes

by TWEED ROOSEVELT

It began in the wilds of Scotland where I went from the United States as a young boy to live with my mother. My parents had been divorced and my mother had recently remarried a Scottish psychiatrist. To me he was intimidating indeed. He was a huge man, taciturn in the way of many Scots. He had a formidable temper, of which I was aware but from which I had never suffered. As well as being a physician, he was a writer of some note, having just published a successful book about his experiences doctoring the sailors of a Scandinavian whaling fleet. He decided to pursue a career as a writer and moved my mother to the Scottish Borders.

They lived in Tweedsmuir, Peebleshire, at the end of a deep glen, miles up a dirt track accessible only by Land Rover, fording the burn numerous times and passing through seven heavy wooden gates that had to be lifted open by hand. Down the burn the nearest house was three miles away. In every other direction it was many miles over high, almost impassible "hills" to the nearest habitations. Above the house up the glen was a great peat bog of many thousands of acres (reminiscent of Grimpen Mire). The house itself was a three-room shepherd's cottage of stone built at least 200 years ago and with neither electricity nor a telephone.

That first summer I arrived from boarding school, a lonely, confused little boy. As you might imagine, I viewed my stepfather with considerable suspicion. On his part, he had had little experience with children, and was, no doubt, uncertain as to how to deal with an apprehensive and standoffish new stepson. During the first two days he made some clumsy attempts to ingratiate himself with me, all failures that only served to confirm my suspicions.

On the second evening, as I was preparing to go to bed, my stepfather handed me a copy of a heavy book of well over 1000 pages. Its dense type and lack of pictures only confirmed my initial impression that this was yet another inappropriate offering by this strange and aloof man who clearly had no clue how to deal with young boys. Nonetheless, I dutifully carried it under my arm the 100 or so yards to the little hut my mother had had built to serve as my bedroom. I had no intention of reading it, but finding I had left behind my other book, and neither wishing to trudge back through the cold, dark night, nor having any desire to confront my stepfather again that evening, I resigned myself. Turning on the gaslight, I climbed into bed and started the first chapter—"Mr.

Sherlock Holmes.” That night I finished *Study in Scarlet* and began *Sign of the Four* before falling asleep as the Coleman lantern sputtered into darkness.

I was captivated, reading the Canon through twice that summer. I have re-read it many times since. I have before me now the very book I opened that night so many years ago. It is a little battered, and the spine is falling off, but I love it, for it reminds me of what my stepfather did for a lonely, confused little eleven-year-old boy to help him get through that difficult summer. I will always be grateful to him for giving me the tools to build a small romantic chamber in my heart where it will always be 1895.

What do you know about Sherlock Holmes? Join Wendy in London as she searches for clues about the famous detective. Do the preparation task first. Then, watch the video and do the exercises. Remember you can read the transcript at any time. You can just imagine Sherlock Holmes and his assistant Doctor Watson discussing how to solve crimes here. Dr Watson (Nigel Bruce): Well, whoever's behind all this thing must be out of his mind. Sherlock Holmes (Basil Rathbone): On the contrary, my dear fellow. If my assumptions are correct, this little scheme has behind it the most brilliant and ruthless intellect the world has ever known. Wendy: Roger Johnson is from the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. Sherlock Holmes (/ˈɛʃ.əl.ɪk ˈhɒl.mz/ or /-ˈhɒl.mz/) is a fictional private detective created by British author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Referring to himself as a "consulting detective" in the stories, Holmes is known for his proficiency with observation, deduction, forensic science, and logical reasoning that borders on the fantastic, which he employs when investigating cases for a wide variety of clients, including Scotland Yard. Sherlock Holmes did not care if his clients were rich or poor. He enjoyed solving their interesting problems. He was very happy when he was working. It was the most important thing in his life. One afternoon, I was reading a book and Holmes was standing by the window in our sitting-room. Usually he was very busy and active. But this afternoon he did not seem very happy. I was worried about my friend. 'What's the matter with you today, Holmes?' I asked. Doctor Watson and I have worked together many times. 'I'm very pleased to meet you both,' said the young lady. Then she turned to Holmes and looked at him with her lovely blue eyes. 'Mr Holmes, I've heard that you give people good advice. I'm not a rich woman but I hope you can help me too. This is Sherlock Holmes. SHERLOCK How fresh? Wider. SHERLOCK I've got my eye on a nice little place in central London - together we could afford it. We'll meet there, tomorrow evening, 7 o'clock. (Heading for the door) Sorry, got to dash - I think I left my riding crop in the mortuary. JOHN Is that it? SHERLOCK Is that what? JOHN We've just met and we're going to go and look at a flat?? SHERLOCK Problem? JOHN We don't know a thing about each other. I don't know your name. I don't even know where we're meeting! Sherlock looks at him, a tiny smile - he loves this part. SHERLOCK What's different about this one. You wouldn't have come to get me, if there wasn't something new. LESTRADE You know how they never leave notes?