

# Spider-Sleuth

## A "What If?" about Sherlock Holmes



# Introduction



Sherlock Holmes is the esteemed private detective that solves the most vexing mysteries of the London populace. But his life suddenly changes when a cargo of strange beasts crashes on the coast, leading Sherlock to be bitten by a mysterious spider that grants him unimaginable new strengths.

# Chapter 1



"I best be off, Watson. Scotland Yard needs my help at the coast. No, my dear friend, I don't think you're needed for this one. A small case, easily solved, but Lestrade practically begged for me to go." He threw on his coat and slid his pistol into his pocket as he strode out the door. But as I heard the front door downstairs slam shut and the rattle of a hansom grow more distant, I began to worry. There had been a tinge of worry in Holmes' face that I had not seen since his dreadful experience with the devious Moriarty. I knew he had the intent to protect me then, so that I would not inadvertently betray his secret. And the same with the hound of the ill-fated Baskervilles.

I had half a mind to leave and follow Holmes, but I trusted his judgement. So I sat awake late into the night, keeping an eye out for Holmes's return with Mrs. Hudson. At half past eleven, I stood to stretch my legs and caught a glimpse of a slightly crumpled telegram with the official Scotland Yard stamp.

"I know Mister Holmes has his late cases, but something strikes me as eerily wrong with this one. He had such a grim look on his face when he left."

I picked up the telegram and began to read.

HOLMES,

I need your help urgently. Horrible creatures at coast defy all logic. Hear rumors of thing called radioactivity. Need advice but would appreciate presence.

LESTRADE

"I do hope he's alright."

I shuddered as I read the note. I unfolded the rest of the paper, and a copy of Holmes's reply fell out. It read,

Remember the hound. All physical beings, however fantastic, have mortal flesh and blood. Will come at once.

HOLMES

I felt my heart drop into my stomach.

"No matter the danger he wants to protect me from, I will go after him. He needs help with this, even if he said no. I know he said to stay, but I feel it is my duty to help now." So spoke I as I donned my coat and hat. Mrs. Hudson insisted on staying and waiting for our return, that her old bones couldn't keep up with us.

I opened the front door to run straight into a police messenger boy coming out of a cab, pale faced and thin.

"Doctor, we need your help! Holmes—"

I sprung into the cab as the messenger spun around and lashed the reins.

"What with Holmes?"

"He's injured, but not like broken bones or a stabbing. He got bit by one of those creatures, a spider. Lestrade mentioned it could have radio... radioact-"

"Radioactivity?"

"Yes, sir."

I had only heard whispers of a new scientific discovery with this name. I only hoped it wouldn't harm my friend. He, who fought Moriarty and his gang and lived-!

As we got closer to the coast, I saw the bodies of distorted beasts with dark blood oozing from numerous bullet holes. I saw Lestrade and other constables huddled around a figure slumped against a broken crate.

"Hold him-"

"He's thrashing, fighting me-"

"Holmes! It's us!"

Holmes' face was contorted in the utmost agony, and his aquiline face was dreadfully pale.

"Holmes!" I shouted, already out of the cab and running towards him.

*You know what to do, Holmes. It's in your blood now.*

He stopped struggling, a cold sweat on his face as he shakily pushed Lestrade aside, eyes staring straight at me.

"W-Watson, do not fear..."

*You're one of us.*

He stuck out his hand, and something whizzed towards me and stuck to my coat. Then I was suddenly pulled in

front of Holmes, face to face with him. He had to be delirious, but his eyes, although suffering some unimaginable pain, were as clear and sharp as ever.

"Holmes, how- what-"

"It... felt right. It... felt like what I needed to do." Then he looked mortified.

"Felt? No, I must react logically, emotions are your realm, Watson... I cannot allow myself to be swayed..."

He breathed heavily for a moment, and his eyelids drooped lower.

"Just... a... moment, Watson..." he whispered.

I began to realize the state he was in. His coat was torn in places, and both his wrists were red and inflamed, although they seemed to be healing even as I examined the dreadful spider bite on his left hand.

I felt my courage slowly return.

"What... what happened here? What happened to him?"

"It was those creatures, Doctor. They came out of these crates, rampaging. I guess that spider was one of them. It bit him, and then he started convulsing and groaning in pain."

That was my friend. He would never howl in pain, no matter the severity.

"His wrists are inflamed..." I then realized there was a strange sort of string on his right wrist that I hadn't noticed before in my confusion. I went to remove it but Holmes opened his eyes and gripped me tight with his other hand, horribly tight. Too tight- "Don't

touch it-" "Ow, Holmes, I was just trying to make sense of all this!" He let go as I pulled my hand away, barely able to process what was happening. "My... my deepest apologies, Watson... I seem to not know my own strength tonight..."

I nursed my throbbing wrist, my anger slowly fading when I realized that Holmes' pain was more than what I was facing.

"Watson, I feel most dreadful and wonderful. I must study this further..." His eyes closed again slightly as he lifted his hand, the strange string still attached to his now barely inflamed wrist. I carefully pulled the sticky material off my lapel, too stunned to speak.

"Fascinating, Watson. Fascinating."

My mind was racing, but no brilliant spark of a clear explanation came to me.

"I don't believe it..." whispered Lestrade in an awestruck tone.

Holmes coughed as he sat up more and spoke, "You better, Lestrade. I will claw the scientific evidence out of my own veins if I have to... have to... I have to prove..." He slumped forward and I caught him, feeling even more concerned.

I heard him draw a shuddering breath, and whisper in my ear, "To home, Watson..."

"Are you sure you can handle this? He's clearly horribly ill-"

I carefully lifted Holmes up, staggering slightly. "And I am his friend and a medical man. You have nothing to fear."

"Well, keep us in the know, Doctor. I'll send you back with the boy."

As the cab rattled back to our humble abode, I felt a sick gnawing grief, that I should have left sooner, and save him from the illness he was facing. My mind was racing with a thousand possibilities, but none of them were even remotely believable.

Mrs. Hudson gasped as we staggered inside, me supporting Holmes and helping him into his usual chair.

I recounted our experience to her, wincing at every word, still feeling in some way responsible for his condition.

Then Holmes broke in on my thoughts and said, "It was not your fault, Watson. And this condition seems to be a great source of mystery for me to study... and not at all an illness, despite your medical instincts... this is... something else."

"If you're sure of it, then please, tell me what you know! I've been in the dark for too long. This isn't like before, where you thought I could betray you through care and comfort, this matter is only between us here."

Holmes' face betrayed a hint of surprise, and then good-natured pleasure.

"Alright. My mind is not yet... made up, but I will indulge you tonight."

## Chapter 2



"My experience at the coast was infinitely surprising, even to me. I now have reason to believe that this radioactive arachnid has, through its potent venom, affected my physical abilities to an extent that seems, at first, a fanciful flight of imagination."

"But remember, Watson, how I've said that when you eliminate the impossible, what remains is the truth, no matter how absurd it seems? This is yet another case that demonstrates it perfectly. I will recount what I have learned in my short time with these powers, and you both may feel free to interject at any time, should I seem to confuse you."

Mrs. Hudson and I pulled our chairs closer to Holmes as he lit his pipe and breathed in, the smoke beginning to rise in grey wisps.

"As you have read from my telegram - the one you so haphazardly replaced on my table - there was a strange cargo that had washed ashore on the coast, and naturally, Lestrade wished for my aid. So I came, my mind a blank slate to the constables' rumors and whispers of workers at the wharf. I was informed of their beliefs, but I did not allow my investigation to be swayed by their perspective. I came to the scene, faced with those creatures, and the constables firing away. A cursory inspection yielded only the knowledge that these creatures were

or had been some sort of scientific experiment or weapon, based on what I saw of their deformity and figure. I had done a precursory investigation as to the owner of the cargo, but it was a trail of pseudonyms and vanishing companies. No matter. I will track it down. But it bears little importance to my current investigation. What mattered was that these beasts were whipped to frenzy, frothing and murderous. I joined the fray and was swiped at unexpectedly - you can see the sorry state of my coattails. I recovered, however, and laid my hand on top of one of the smaller crates that littered the dock. Then I saw the spider, but could not afford to be distracted."

He smiled sardonically.

"But as you know, I did end up being distracted, in a sense. I am not one to embellish things, but I was soon only dimly aware of my surroundings, the last gunshots ringing hollowly as I was racked with a most unpleasant sensation."

"If you were sure about the danger those creatures could cause, then why didn't you bring some extra help?" Mrs. Hudson's old voice broke the strange stupor of Holmes' words. She stretched out her finger and pointed to me. "I'm sure the constables would have appreciated the extra hands."

"A very astute statement. I did

not bring Watson, seeing as the case seemed rather open-and-shut... at the time. I thought I had found the one who had sent the cargo, but I received a note on the way to the wharf that showed the end of that thread. And I had presumed that Lestrade and his men were more than capable of taking down those beasts. Which they indeed were, they kept their minds clear even as I was thrashing about on the dock."

"Lestrade was the first to notice my state, and I managed to tell him to send for you."

My heart was touched by this. Even in the throes of horrible spasms, he was able to ask for my help. The guilt came back suddenly.

"I should have brought you. But I erred, misled by my initial investigation."

He paused for a moment, emotion briefly showing on his face, before he resumed the countenance of the cool and logical reasoner.

"As I mentioned, I was only dimly aware of what was happening. But I soon became aware of a strange vigor in my limbs, as though my strength had been renewed. I am sorry that I handled you so roughly, Watson, but I, in my daze, was still investigating the next mystery."

He rolled down his shirt cuffs, and examined his wrists.

"From my experiment, I found the material was emitted from here." He pointed to the base of his wrist, where

the palm meets the rest of the arm. "I suddenly became acquainted with the knowledge of how to use this material, but of course, I must investigate further."

I gasped. "That was what was on my lapel! A strange material indeed." Then I frowned. "You reeled me in, like a fish on a line."

Holmes looked thoughtful. "Yes, I suppose I did. That was why I did not wish you to touch the point of secretion, lest it cause some unexpected result."

"I confess, I did not know it had such adhesive properties. But I will investigate further tomorrow."

"Back to the wharf. I now had two new investigations in progress. I realized that my work for Lestrade was complete, and my presence was no longer needed. My investigations, although unfinished, have already borne much fruit. But we can continue this discussion tomorrow, I'm sure."

"Sure, Holmes. I think we should all get some rest."

Mrs. Hudson said, "Alright, Mister Holmes, but I want to hear the end of it." She wished us good night as she stood and left, leaving me and Holmes in the sitting room.

"I'll take some rest soon, Watson. I want to pursue a small thread of the case first."

As I undressed and pulled the covers over myself, I found myself with one thought as I fell asleep. *What had my friend gotten into?*

## Chapter 3



I awoke to a strange sight that nearly caused me to shout in alarm. The bedposts and walls were criss-crossed with whitish string, and Holmes himself was perched at the post at the foot of the bed. I implore you, dear reader, to not perceive this statement as one of my "embellishments," he was truthfully perched like a strange bird, already dressed except for his shoes, because his feet seemed to be clamped around the post in a balancing act.

"Holmes-! What-"

"My investigation is coming along nicely, my dear friend. I do apologize for the mess. I will dispose of it shortly. I just could not resist a touch of showmanship, seeing how marvelous this case is becoming." He leapt down lightly from the post and landed silently like a cat on the floor, one hand on one of the strings and the other on the floor splayed out.

"Fascinating."

That was a word I would hear much of in the coming weeks.

**Part I**

**TODO**



"Well, Watson, this is certainly a case for your annals, eh? It is quite fascinating."

"I am hesitant to put it to paper, Holmes."

Holmes smiled. "Not even in the interests of medicine? Imagine how this secretion could perform as a bandage, for example."

I shook my head.

"No, I cannot in good conscience disclose this to the public. There are too

many ruffians who would leap at the chance to use this..."

I gestured at Holmes in a feeble attempt to describe the bizarre situation he was now in.

"Power?" continued Holmes quietly.

"Yes," I replied feebly. Holmes's utterance had sent a chill down my spine.

Then Holmes smiled. "Yes, I am inclined to agree with you. It is too mighty a thing to bandy about in the streets."

# Colophon



This book was written using L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X, and the font used was Libre Baskerville.

# Acknowledgements



I give my acknowledgement to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who brought the great sleuth into the public eye, and without him, I would not have been able to write this little story.