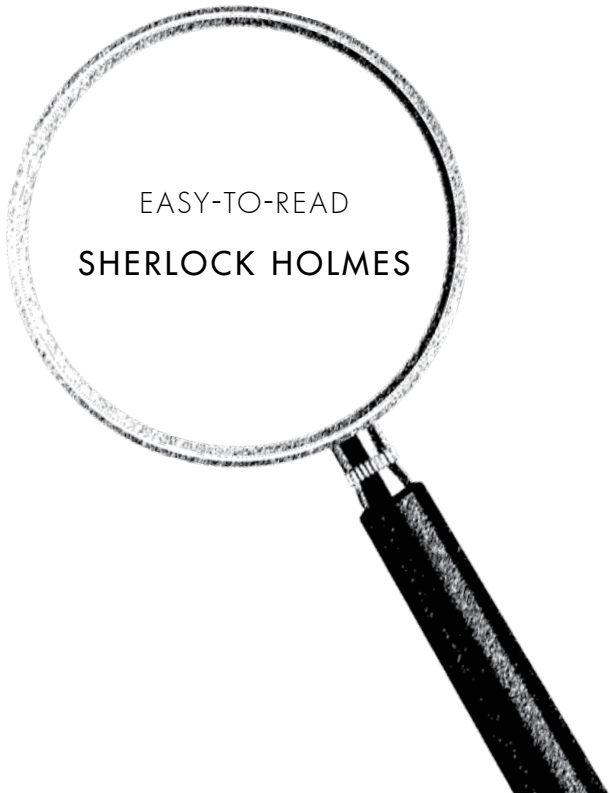


Sherlock Holmes

The Speckled Band

The famous story of Arthur Conan Doyle,
narrated by Helene Bakker



EASY-TO-READ
SHERLOCK HOLMES

Sherlock Holmes was a famous English private detective. He didn't really exist, but the writer Arthur Conan Doyle wrote so well that many people think he did.

Sherlock Holmes started work as a detective about 150 years ago in the city of London, along with his friend Doctor Watson. The way Holmes solved attacks and murders has made him famous all over the world. Even today, films are still made about his detective work.

CHAPTER 1

An early start

It's half past six in the morning.

Sherlock Holmes wakes up with a start when the doorbell rings. He sits up in bed as it rings again.

'Alright, alright, I'm coming,' he grumbles.

He throws on his dressing gown and hurries to the front door.

A woman is standing at the door.

She's dressed all in black.

Even her face is covered by a black veil. She clearly doesn't want to be recognised, thinks Sherlock.

'Good morning, madam,' he says. 'You woke me up. What is it?'

'I... I... I...,' stammers the woman.

Then she starts to tremble.

Sherlock can see that something is seriously wrong.

‘Come in. I’ll make a cup of coffee.

Then you can tell me why you want to talk to me so early in the morning.’

He leads the woman to the sitting room.

When she sits down, she lifts her veil.

Sherlock sees a pale face, with big, frightened eyes.

Her brown hair is already turning grey, though she doesn’t look very old.

He thinks she might be about thirty.

‘Wait here a moment,’ he says in a friendly tone. ‘You’ll have some coffee, won’t you?’

The woman still hasn’t said anything.

She just nods her head.

Sherlock goes to the kitchen and puts the kettle on.

Then he goes to Watson’s room and wakes him up.

‘What is it?’ Watson looks at his friend sleepily. ‘Are you...?’

‘No, I’m not ill. I’ve just been called out of bed by a woman.

She's sitting downstairs and looks really frightened.

So frightened she can't speak.

I'm hoping she'll recover with a cup of coffee and tell us why she's here.

Are you coming downstairs too?

Then you can hear what she has to say.'

'Of course I'm coming,' says Watson, getting out of bed.

'You're making me curious.'

When Sherlock Holmes enters the room with the coffee a little later, the woman is still sitting huddled in the chair.

'I see you're shivering. Are you very cold?'

'I'm not shivering from cold,' whispers the woman.

'Why, then?'

'Because I'm afraid, Mr Holmes, very afraid.'

At that moment Watson comes into the room.

The woman immediately pulls the veil back over her face.

'There's no need to be afraid, madam,' Sherlock reassures her.

'This is my friend Watson.
I always work with him.
It's fine for him to hear everything.
What you tell us will remain secret.'
Slowly the woman looks from Watson to
Sherlock, to Watson and back to Sherlock.
Then she nods and removes her veil.

'So, tell us what's wrong,' says Sherlock Holmes
when the three of them all have their coffee.