

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Sherlock Holmes

## The Case of the Sussex Vampire

One chilly afternoon in late fall, two notes came to Sherlock Holmes by mail. He read the first one carefully. Then, with a chuckle, he passed the letter to me. "What do you make of this, Watson?" he asked.



*Sir,*

*Mr. Robert Ferguson, a client of ours, has consulted us on a matter involving vampires. This is a subject about which we know nothing. Therefore, we have suggested that Mr. Ferguson talk the matter over with you.*

*Faithfully yours,*

*Morrison and Dodd, Attorneys at Law*

"But, Holmes," I said, "what do *you* know about vampires?"

"Little enough, Watson, and, frankly, I find it hard to take Mr. Ferguson very seriously. But it looks like this second letter is from the man himself; it may shed some light on what's troubling him."

Holmes opened the letter and began to read. When he'd finished, he handed me the letter. "He claims to know you, Watson. Here, you can read what he says for yourself."



*Dear Mr. Holmes,*

*My lawyers have suggested that I get in touch with you. The matter concerns a dear friend of mine. Five years ago, my friend married the daughter of a South American merchant. The woman is beautiful and as loving a wife as any man could have. Her background and culture are very different from my friend's, however. And this has caused problems between the two of them. He feels that there are very many things about her that he will never understand.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Sherlock Holmes



*Recently, my friend's wife has begun to act strangely, quite different from her usual sweet and gentle self. My friend has one son by his first wife (who died seven years ago). The boy is now fifteen. Unfortunately, he is crippled because of an accident in his early childhood. Twice now my friend has found his wife striking the poor lad. Once she hit him with a stick and left a nasty bruise on his arm.*

*Stranger still are her actions toward her own infant son, who is not yet one year old. About a month ago, the child's nurse left him alone for a few minutes. A cry of pain came from the nursery, so the nurse hurried back. There she saw my friend's wife bending over the baby, apparently biting his neck. A stream of blood was running down the baby's small shoulder. The nurse would have told my friend, but her mistress begged her not to say anything and even paid her five pounds for her silence.*

*From then on, the nurse watched her mistress carefully and kept a close guard over the baby whom she loves dearly. But she couldn't forget what she'd seen and was so troubled by it, that she finally told my friend what had happened. Of course, he would not believe her. But, later that same day, hearing loud cry of pain from the baby, he rushed into the nursery.*

*There he found his wife bending over his infant son! The poor little boy had blood streaming from his neck. My friend pulled his wife away from the baby and turned her face to the light. There was blood on her lips. Without a doubt, his wife had drunk the poor baby's blood.*

*This is how the matter stands. My friend's wife is now confined to her room. There has been no explanation, and my friend is half mad with grief. Will you please help him? If so, kindly wire me, and I will be at your door by ten o'clock tomorrow morning.*

*Sincerely,*

*Robert Ferguson*

*P.S. I believe I played rugby with your friend Watson while we were in school.*



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sherlock Holmes

"Of course, I remembered him," I said as I laid down the letter. "Big Bob Ferguson. He was always a good-natured chap. It's like him to be so concerned over a friend's case."

Holmes looked at me thoughtfully and shook his head. "Really, Watson," he said, "the case is obviously his own. It's easy enough to see through his little lie. I'll send him a note saying that we'll take on his case with pleasure."



Promptly at ten o'clock the next morning, Robert Ferguson strode into the room. This was hardly the great athlete he had been at school. His blond hair was scanty, his shoulders were bowed, and his muscular build had grown flabby.

"Hullo, Watson," he said, "it's good to see you again. And you, Mr. Holmes. Thank you for taking up my case; I see from your telegram that there's no use pretending that I'm here on behalf of a friend."

"It's simpler this way," Holmes replied.

"Of course, it is. But you can imagine the difficult situation I find myself in. I love my wife, and yet the children have got to be protected. Is it madness, Mr. Holmes? Please, give me some advice, for I am at my wit's end."

"Very naturally, Mr. Ferguson. Now pull yourself together and give me a few clear answers. I am confident that we'll find a solution. Now, tell me what steps you have taken. Is your wife still near the children?"

"No, Camilla was heartbroken that I had discovered her horrible secret. She has locked herself in her room and refuses to talk to me or see me. Her maid, Dolores, has been taking care of her. Dolores is actually more of a friend than a servant."

"Then the baby is in no immediate danger?"

"No, Mrs. Mason, the nurse, has sworn that she will not leave it night or day. I trust her completely. I am more uneasy about poor little Jack; Camilla has attacked him twice already."



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sherlock Holmes

"Was the boy seriously hurt?"

"No. He was more surprised by her viciousness than anything else. She struck at him savagely and has neither apologized nor explained why."

"She gave no explanation at all?"

"None except that she hated him."

"And your son? Could he explain the attacks?"

"No, he said there was no reason."

"Before these strange attacks, how did your son feel about his stepmother?"

"There was never any love between them. And yet Jack is an extremely affectionate child. He was thoroughly devoted to his mother, as he is to me. He and I have always been very close. Never in the world could there be a more devoted son."

"One last point, then. It seems that the two boys were attacked in two very different ways."

"That is so."

"Now, tell me, did the attacks happen around the same time?"

"In the first case, yes. It was as if some frenzy had seized Camilla, and she vented her anger on them both. In the second case, only Jack suffered. And in the third, only the baby."

"That certainly complicates matters. Rest assured, though, I'm not in the least discouraged. Your problem is not insoluble; it just requires some on-the-spot investigation. If it's agreeable to you, Watson and I will visit you at your home tomorrow afternoon."

"That is exactly what I hoped, Mr. Holmes. Thank you."

*To be continued. . .*