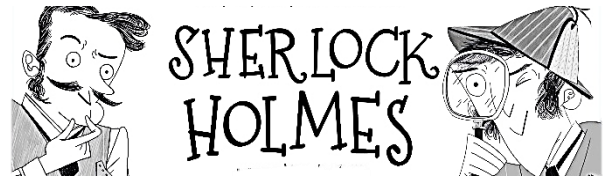


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The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle by Arthur Conan Doyle

Part 1: The Christmas Goose

London, England. 1889.

It was Boxing Day, the day after Christmas, when I made my way carefully through the icy London streets to 221B Baker Street. I was married now and no longer shared the flat with my dear friend Sherlock Holmes, but I still had a key, so I unlocked the door and let myself in.



I found Holmes lounging on the sofa, wearing his favorite purple dressing gown. He had been smoking his pipe, and reading the morning's newspapers, which were now crumpled on the floor.

But what immediately caught my eye was the magnifying glass resting on a wooden chair by the sofa, and, hanging from the back of the same chair, a battered old hat.

I knew immediately this hat did not belong to Holmes, and the magnifying glass and forceps nearby told me the hat was a clue in some sort of mystery Holmes was working on.

"Merry Christmas, Holmes," I said, as I made myself comfortable by the fire. "I see you're busy. A Christmas mystery to solve?"

"It is nothing special," Holmes said. "Just a lost hat and a lost goose."

I stared at Holmes. "A goose, did you say?"

Holmes smiled. "A big, fat Christmas goose, Watson. Some poor soul went home without his hat and without his Christmas goose on Christmas Eve. I would imagine his wife was not best pleased."

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I looked around the room, but there was no goose to be seen. "I see the hat, Holmes," I said, "but not the goose."

"That is because it is even now roasting in Mrs. Peterson's oven," Holmes said.

"Mrs. Peterson's oven?" I stared in amazement at Holmes.

"Surely, you remember the Petersons, Watson. Mr. Peterson was the one who found the goose."

"But what if the rightful owner returns to claim it?" I asked.

"More importantly, Watson, what if he doesn't?" replied Holmes. "Another day and the goose would be of no use to anyone. Better that Peterson and his family enjoy it than that it goes to waste."

"But how on earth does one lose one's hat and one's Christmas goose?" I demanded.

"It was like this, Watson," Holmes said. "You see, Peterson had been out late on Christmas Eve on some business or other, and on his way home saw a scuffle between an elderly man and some young ruffians. The man had been wearing this very hat, and carried a Christmas goose over his shoulder."

"So what happened?" I asked.

"It seems the boys were fooling around and knocked off the old man's hat. Peterson called out for them to be more careful, and the scoundrels ran off—but so did the man. By the time Peterson got to the scene all that was left was this battered old hat and a fine Christmas goose."



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"And now," I said, "you have no idea to whom the hat and goose belong, and so you have been examining the hat for clues."

"Indeed so, Watson," Holmes said. "We have a name, but no address. The hat and goose belong to a Mr. Henry Baker. That was easily found out, because the goose had a card tied to its leg, with the words 'For Mrs. Henry Baker' on it. Also, the hat has the initials H.B. on the lining. But that is all we know. There must be hundreds of gentlemen by the name of Henry Baker here in big city like London."

Just then, there was a knock on the door, and Peterson burst into the room.

"The goose, Mr. Holmes!" shouted Peterson excitedly. "The goose!"

Holmes and I stared in bewilderment at Peterson.

"Look here, sir. My wife found this in the throat of the goose."



Holmes took the object from Peterson and held it up to the light from the frosted window. It looked like a large diamond or ruby, except that it was the most beautiful blue color.

"In its throat?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," Peterson said breathlessly. "My wife was preparing the bird for the oven when she found it."

"Incredible," said Holmes. "Do you know what this is, Peterson?"

Petersen shrugged. "Not really, Mr. Holmes. Only that it looks valuable. It's not a diamond, is it?"

"Indeed not," said Holmes. "But in some ways this is far more valuable than a diamond. Peterson, you have recovered the *Blue Carbuncle*!"

"You mean the Countess of Morcar's blue carbuncle?" I exclaimed. "The

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precious jewel that was stolen from the Hotel Cosmopolitan just a few days ago?"

"The very same," said Holmes. "A plumber by the name of John Horner has been arrested and charged with the theft, but the gem itself was never found."

"But how would the Countess's blue carbuncle come to be in the throat of Mr. Henry Baker's Christmas goose?" I said.

Holmes rubbed his hands with glee. "That, my dear Watson, is what we must find out. What a delightful little problem to present itself during this otherwise rather dull Christmas week."

"Do you think Mr. Baker is somehow involved with the theft, Holmes?" I asked?

"Possibly," said Holmes. "I say, Watson, would you be so kind as to stop by the newspaper office on your way home and ask them to insert this lost-and-found ad into the afternoon paper: *'Found, one hat and one Christmas goose. Would Mr. Henry Baker kindly come to 221b Baker Street at 6.30 pm tonight to collect his lost belongings'?*"

"Certainly, Holmes," I replied.

Holmes then turned to Peterson. "Go on home and enjoy your goose dinner, Peterson. I'll see to it that the carbuncle is returned to the Countess, and I'd be surprised if you don't get a nice reward for finding it."

"Now, Watson," said Holmes when Peterson had left, "I must go buy another goose to replace the one the Petersons are dining on. After all, we must have something to give Mr. Baker when he arrives. And, Watson, I do hope you'll return this evening in time to meet Mr. Henry Baker in case he should he turn up to collect his goose and hat."

To be continued . . .