



# Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia

## A Case of Identity

### SUMMARY (Diogenes Club)

Watson is married and not living at Baker street.

Mary lives with her mother and stepfather. She is a good typist and can type as many as 15 to 20 pages a day for which she receives 2d per sheet. She also has some New Zealand stock which she inherited from her Uncle Ned which pays her 20 pounds a year. She thus has a very good income but gives her money to her parents since she lives with them. Naturally, her step-father does not wish her to get married and leave home, taking her inheritance with her. She meets Hosmer at the Gasfitter's Ball and falls in love with him.

It is a very strange courtship. Hosmer only shows up when James is in France; he wears tinted glasses and whiskers, he only walks out at dusk, all his letters to Mary reveal nothing about him and all are typewritten --including his signature. He speaks in a whispered voice (he told Mary he had quinsy as a child). He tells Mary he is a cashier in an office, but not where he works. He gets his mail general delivery and Mary does not know his address. Even Lestrade could see that Hosmer is James in disguise! He wants to keep Mary at home so he can enjoy her income. Hosmer arranges to wed Mary and makes her promise that she will wait for him - no matter what happens. He then disappears on the way to the altar. Mrs. Windibank, who was a part of the scheme, advises Mary to come home and wait for Hosmer to reappear.

Holmes contacts James at his office by mail and asks him to drop by Baker street. James writes back to say he will come and Holmes can tell that both James' letter of reply and Hosmer's letters were typed on the same machine.



Holmes threatens to beat Windibank severely because of his actions, although Windibank points out that he has not committed a crime. Holmes decides not to tell Mary the truth because he feels she will not believe him. He predicts that Windibank will rise higher in the annals of crime.

### **SUMMARY (ACD Encyclopedia)**

Miss Mary Sutherland consults Sherlock Holmes because her fiancé Mr Hosmer Angel disappeared just before their wedding. After hearing her story, Sherlock Holmes thinks this case is quite simple as he knows some similar cases.

By a simple exchange of letters with Mr Windibank, Mary's step-father, he manages to confound him. The latter confess that to avoid the loss of his stepdaughter fortune, he disguised himself and pretended to be Mr Angel to seduce her.

The girl fell into the trap. He made her promise to remain faithful to him (Angel) whatever life events may occur. His idea was to eliminate Angel so that Mary remains forever single and that he could enjoy the rent of his stepdaughter.

Unfortunately, Holmes can not do much because Windibank done nothing actionable. He decides not to tell anything to Mary as she would not believe him.

### **SUMMARY (Wikipedia)**

Against the wishes of her stepfather, Mary Sutherland has become engaged to Hosmer Angel. On the morning of their wedding Hosmer elicits a promise that Mary will remain faithful to him "even if something quite unforeseen" occurs, then mysteriously disappears en route to the church. Holmes deduces that Hosmer was Mary's stepfather in disguise, the charade a bid to keep Mary a spinster and thus maintain access to her inheritance. Holmes does not reveal the truth to Mary because "There is danger for him who taketh the tiger cub, and danger also for whoso snatches a delusion from a woman"; he had already advised her to put the matter behind her, though she responded that Hosmer "shall find me ready when he comes back." At the end, Mary's stepfather escapes and Sherlock Holmes predicts he will commit more crimes.

The story revolves around the case of Miss Mary Sutherland, a woman with a substantial income from the interest on a fund set up for her. She is engaged to a quiet Londoner who has recently disappeared.

Sherlock Holmes' detective powers are barely challenged as this turns out to be quite an elementary case for him, much as it puzzles Watson.

The fiancé, Hosmer Angel, is a peculiar character, rather quiet, and rather secretive about his life. Miss Sutherland only knows that he works in an office in Leadenhall Street, but nothing more specific than that. All his letters to her are typewritten, even the signature, and he insists that she write back to him through the local Post Office. The climax of the sad liaison comes when Mr. Angel abandons Miss Sutherland at the altar on their wedding day.

Holmes, noting all these things, Hosmer Angel's description, and the fact that he only seems to meet with Miss Sutherland while her disapproving youngish stepfather, James Windibank, is out of the country on business, reaches a conclusion quite quickly. A typewritten letter confirms his belief beyond doubt. Only one person could have gained by this: Mr. James Windibank. Holmes deduces "Angel" had "disappeared" by simply going out the other side of a four-wheeler cab.

After solving the mystery, Holmes chooses not to tell his client the solution, since "If I tell her she will not believe me. You may remember the old Persian saying, 'There is danger for him who taketh the tiger cub, and danger also for whoso snatches a delusion from a woman.' There is as much sense in Hafiz as in Horace, and as much knowledge of the world." Holmes had earlier advised his client to forget "Mr. Angel", but Miss Sutherland refused to take Holmes' advice and vowed to remain faithful to "Angel" until he reappears – for at least ten years.

Holmes predicts Windibank will continue a career in crime and end up on the gallows.