



## The Return of Sherlock Holmes

### Adventure XXXIII -- The Adventure of Black Peter

By this point in his career, Holmes has found fame, success and also wealth thanks to that cheque from Lord Holderness, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

But as Watson reminds us, these things are not the focus of Holmes' work and despite his great success he still turns down cases that are not of interest even though the financial gains would be high and clients notorious. He hasn't risen too high to take on cases where the only reward is the resolution to a fascinating problem and is happy for the local police to take the credit for his discoveries.

In this story we are introduced to a young police inspector, Hopkins, who is very respectful towards Holmes and seems keen to learn from so great a teacher. Holmes in turn has high regard for the potential of this young man. But still, the outcome is the same as with Lestrade and all the other police who work with Holmes – Hopkins fixes upon the wrong theory and ignores the hints from Holmes which would put him back on the right track.

In Watson's introduction we hear about how Holmes has been round to the local butchers with a harpoon and tried to drive it through a hanging pig carcass. Nothing unusual there then. This is followed by a hearty breakfast and a visit from Hopkins during which he explains the details of the case. An old sea captain, Black Peter, who was a hateful drunkard, has been murdered in his funny little cabin by someone who stabbed him with his own harpoon.



The strength needed to drive the harpoon through the man's body, the initials on a pouch of ship's tobacco (the dead man didn't smoke much) and the presence of two glasses and a bottle of rum on the table suggest straight away to Holmes that the murderer must be a sailor.

He busies himself following this line of inquiry by taking on the persona of Captain Basil who advertises for a harpooner to join an expedition. All great fun – particularly at the expense of Hopkins.

Hopkins has arrested an innocent young man who has got caught up the case due to something complicated involving his father and some investments which the murdered man stole from him.

Holmes reminds us all, and young Hopkins, why he is the master of his profession and as usual, makes everything seem so obvious once explained.

Holmes curiously remarks at the end that he and Watson will be going to Norway, presumably for a holiday but this seems very out of character. The innocent man's father was killed by Black Peter in that area but I don't see any professional reason why Holmes would go there unless I have missed something. So perhaps, due to his heavily workload of late and all that money from Lord Holdernese, now seems like the perfect time to take a break – and how nice to take Watson along too? I hope he pays for everything though, as poor Watson is now his full-time helper and without income.

**7 out of 10.**

**Charlotte Anne Walters**

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