



Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia

His Last Bow Adventure XLI -- The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge

SUMMARY (Diogenes Club)

Holmes and Watson are living together. Mrs. Hudson is on duty.

Eccles comes to them with the story that he was invited to spend a few days with Garcia. He arrived, had a lousy dinner, went to bed, was awakened by Garcia who asked if he had rung and told him it was 1:00 A.M. When Eccles awoke next morning, the house was empty and everyone had vanished. He contacted Holmes.

Garcia's house and Henderson's house are about a mile apart and separated by a common. Garcia is found murdered in a dark corner of the common.

Henderson was formerly an exceedingly cruel despot in Central America. He was finally forced to flee the country by a group of Freedom Fighters of whom Garcia was one. Miss Burnet was Garcia's confederate. Henderson had her husband assassinated. She had obtained a position as governess in Henderson's house. She attempted to send a note to Garcia telling the room where Henderson was to be sleeping.



Garcia had Eccles spend the night, and lied to him about the time when he looked in at his room, and went to kill Henderson while he slept. Eccles – supplied with the misinformation as to the time – was to supply an alibi.

Burnet's note had been intercepted, and then sent on. As Garcia was crossing the common, he was attacked and murdered by Lucas.

The mulatto fled but returned to Wisteria Lodge the next night to get his fetish. His first attempt was unsuccessful so he returned a few nights later to try again. Baynes et al were waiting for him and captured him after a fierce struggle.

With the Mulatto arrested and charged with the murder, Henderson and his gang felt free to move about. They were holding Mrs. Burnet prisoner. They decided to flee while they were safe, but were followed by Warner whom Holmes had hired to watch their house. Miss Burnet broke free at the station, was picked up by Warner and brought to Holmes. She told Holmes about the freedom fighters, about her husband's assassination and about Henderson's unsavory past.

Henderson escaped but was murdered six months later in Madrid along with Lucas.

Baynes had solved the case too and had arrested the Mulatto so Henderson would feel he was not suspected, lower his guard, and permit Baynes et al to rescue Burnet.

SUMMARY (ACD Encyclopedia)

John Scott Eccles, a proper English gentleman, visits Holmes to tell him about the "grotesque" events of the previous night. He was invited to visit Wisteria Lodge by one Aloysus Garcia, a man seemingly working for the Spanish embassy, that he knew slightly. His host seemed preoccupied all evening, and his mood worsened when he received a note that he crumpled and threw out. Later, when Scott Eccles was in bed, Garcia came to his room to ask why he rang at one in the morning although, being that he was asleep, he obviously had not. When he woke up in the morning, Eccles was stunned to find that everyone had vanished. Back in London, he inquired about Garcia and discovered that nobody at the embassy knew him.

While Eccles is talking to Holmes, Inspectors Gregson and Baynes arrive to tell them that Garcia's corpse has been found on a common near Wisteria Lodge with his head smashed. The policemen found the invitation he sent to Eccles in his pocket, which makes Eccles a suspect. They also found the letter Garcia had received and crumpled the previous night, written in a woman's handwriting.

Holmes realizes that Eccles' presence at Wisteria Lodge, together with his night-time awakening, was supposed to be used as an alibi for Garcia, who must have had a criminal intent that backfired. The detective also deduces that the woman who wrote the note must be Garcia's accomplice, and must be living in the neighbouring area. The next day Holmes and Watson book rooms in an inn in Esher, and as Holmes tries to collect information, his attention focuses on the curious Mr. Henderson of High Gable Grange. Miss Burnett, the governess of Henderson's daughters, disappeared the same night Garcia was killed.

Shortly thereafter, the governess is found and taken to Holmes and Watson. She's exhausted and has likely been drugged. Henderson was getting onto the train and pushing her into the carriage, but she

struggled with him and escaped. Once her strength returns, she tells Holmes her story: Henderson is really Don Murillo, a bloodthirsty tyrant who led a reign of terror some years ago in Central America. He was overthrown, but somehow managed to escape to Europe. The relatives of his former victims, including Garcia and Miss Burnett (whose real name is Senora Durando) have tracked him down for revenge. She got herself hired as governess in order to be able to inform the others about Murillo's doings. Garcia was supposed to come to enact the revenge, but Murillo discovered the plot, held Miss Burnett prisoner, and killed the young man.

SUMMARY (Wikipedia)

The Singular Experience of Mr. John Scott Eccles

Holmes is visited by a perturbed proper English gentleman, John Scott Eccles, who wishes to discuss something "grotesque". No sooner has he arrived at 221B Baker Street than Inspector Gregson also shows up, along with Inspector Baynes of the Surrey Constabulary. They wish a statement from Eccles about the murder near Esher last night. A note in the dead man's pocket indicates that Eccles said that he would be at the victim's house that night.

Eccles is shocked to hear of Aloysius Garcia's beating death. Yes, he spent the night at Wisteria Lodge, Garcia's rented house, but when he woke up in the morning, he found that Garcia and his servants had all disappeared. He was alone in an empty house. He last remembers seeing Garcia at about one o'clock in the morning when he came to Eccles's room to ask if he had rung.

Eccles met Garcia, a Spaniard, through an acquaintance, and seemed to form an unlikely friendship right away. Garcia invited Eccles to stay at his house for a few days, but when Eccles arrived there, he could tell that something was amiss. Garcia seemed distracted by something, and the whole mood of the visit seemed quite sombre. Indeed, Garcia's mood became even darker once his servant handed him a note that evening.

Eccles left Wisteria Lodge and inquired about the place at the estate agent's, and was surprised to find that the rent on the house had been paid in full. Odder still, no-one at the Spanish Embassy in London had heard of Garcia.

Inspector Baynes produces the note that Eccles saw Garcia receive. It reads "Our own colours, green and white. Green open, white shut. Main stair, first corridor, seventh right, green baize. Godspeed. D.", in a woman's handwriting. Could it have been a tryst? Could a jealous husband be behind Garcia's death?

It emerges that Baynes has deduced that Garcia's body had been lying out in the open since one o'clock, but Eccles says that this is impossible, as Garcia came to his room about then. Holmes theorizes that

Garcia may have tampered with the clocks to get Eccles to bed earlier than he thought it was, and that the whole business of coming to his room and making a point of mentioning that it was one o'clock—when it was probably much earlier—was likely aimed at setting up an alibi, but for what?

All that Holmes can deduce is that the murderer lives near Wisteria Lodge, and in a big house.

The Tiger of San Pedro

Holmes and Dr. Watson go to Esher to see Wisteria Lodge with Inspector Baynes. The constable guarding the house reports a hair-raising experience. A brutish-looking man—the devil himself, thought the constable—looked in the window. The constable gave chase, but the intruder got away. Holmes establishes by the footmarks that the constable did not imagine this.

Inside the house, a number of odd items are to be seen: something resembling a mummified baby, a bird torn to pieces, a pail of blood, and a platter full of charred bones. Holmes later links these to voodoo, providing an important clue.

Suddenly, however, five days after the murder, Holmes is astonished to read in the newspaper that Baynes has arrested someone, Garcia's cook, the brutish fellow who had given the constable such a start. He provides little information, though—only grunts. Holmes is sure that the cook is not the murderer, and warns Baynes. Baynes, however, declines Holmes's assistance and advice.

Holmes spends the next day reconnoitering the local country houses, and finds one of interest, the Henderson household, whose master has obviously spent time in the tropics, and whose secretary, Lucas, is a dark-skinned foreigner. Mr. Henderson's two girls have an English governess named Burnet. Holmes also learns from a sacked gardener that Henderson is rich and scared of something, although no one can say what. Nor can anyone say where he came from. Henderson is also violent.

Holmes believes that the cryptic note came from this household, High Gable, and the writer could only be Miss Burnet, who has not been seen since the night of the murder. Holmes decides to go to High Gable, at night, to see whether he can "strike at the very heart of the mystery." He does not get the chance.

John Warner, the sacked gardener, comes in and announces that the Hendersons have fled by train, and tried to take Miss Burnet with them. He, however, wrestled her into a cab and brought her to the inn where Holmes and Watson are staying. She was obviously unwilling to go with Henderson for she had been drugged with opium.

"Henderson" has also been identified, by Inspector Baynes. He is Don Juan Murillo, the Tiger of San Pedro, a hated and feared overthrown dictator from Central America. It turns out that Garcia, who was from San Pedro, not Spain, got himself killed in a revenge plot. Miss Burnet was also part of the plot. Yes, she

wrote the note, but Murillo's secretary caught her doing it, Murillo confined her, and then awaited Garcia's move, killing him. Miss Burnet's real name is Mrs. Victor Durando. Her late husband was from San Pedro, its ambassador to Britain and a potential political rival to Murillo. Murillo had him recalled and shot so that he could not pose a threat to Murillo's position.

Murillo and his Secretary give the police the slip in London, and resurface in Madrid under new aliases. However, they are both murdered, and their killers are never caught.