



Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia

The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes Adventure LII – The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire

SUMMARY (Diogenes Club)

Watson is living at Baker St.

Ferguson has been married twice and Jackie was from his first marriage. Jackie had been injured as a small child and was left a cripple. He and his father were extremely devoted to each other — to the point that his father doted on him. Jackie developed a jealous cruel hatred for the infant because it took some of his father's affection from himself.

Mrs. Ferguson was found sucking blood from her infant's neck. She was actually sucking poison from a wound which Jackie had made with an arrow dipped in curare. Ferguson had brought the arrows etc. as mementos of his visit to Peru. To make his wife feel more at home, he had decorated the house with a Peruvian décor.

Mrs. Ferguson could not tell her husband what really happened because she felt that either her husband would not believe her or else that it would break his heart to learn that Jackie was so cruel.

Holmes solved the case before he even left Baker street. He recommended a long sea voyage for Jackie but left the Fergusons to settle the matter among themselves. We are not told anything further.



SUMMARY (Wikipedia)

Holmes receives an odd letter that makes reference to vampires. Mr. Robert Ferguson, who comes to 221B Baker Street the next morning, has become convinced that his Peruvian second wife has been sucking their baby son's blood. By his first wife, he has a 15-year-old son named Jack, who suffered an unfortunate accident as a child and now, although he can still walk, does not have full use of his legs. Since the start of the bloodsucking, Jack has unaccountably been struck twice by his stepmother, although Mr. Ferguson cannot imagine why. Ever since being found out by her husband, she has locked herself in her room and refused to come out. Only her Peruvian maid, Dolores, is allowed in. She takes Mrs. Ferguson her meals.

Even before Holmes and Watson set off for Mr. Ferguson's house in Sussex, Holmes has worked out what is going on, and it has nothing to do with vampires. Holmes's trip is made simply to observe and confirm what he has already deduced.

Upon their arrival in Sussex, Mrs. Ferguson's maid announces that her mistress is ill, and Dr. Watson offers to help. He finds an agitated woman in the room upstairs – she speaks of all being destroyed, and of sacrificing herself rather than breaking her husband's heart. She also demands her child, who has been with the nurse, Mrs. Mason, ever since Mr. Ferguson found out about the bloodsucking incidents. Holmes examines the South American weapons displayed in the house and meets the children. While Mr. Ferguson is doting on his younger son, Watson notices that Holmes is gazing at the window. He cannot imagine why his friend is doing this.

Holmes then reveals the truth about what has been happening, much to the relief of Mrs. Ferguson as this is exactly what she has been hoping for: for the truth to come from someone else's lips. It turns out that the culprit is Jack, Mr. Ferguson's elder son, who is extremely jealous of his young half-brother. Holmes has confirmed this by looking at Jack's reflection in the window while his father's attention was on the baby. Jack has been attempting to murder his half-brother by shooting poisoned darts at him, and his stepmother's behaviour of sucking the baby's neck is thereby explained: she was sucking the poison out. It also explains why she struck Jack, and why she was sick when Holmes and Watson arrived. The wounds, therefore, were caused by the darts, not by her biting.