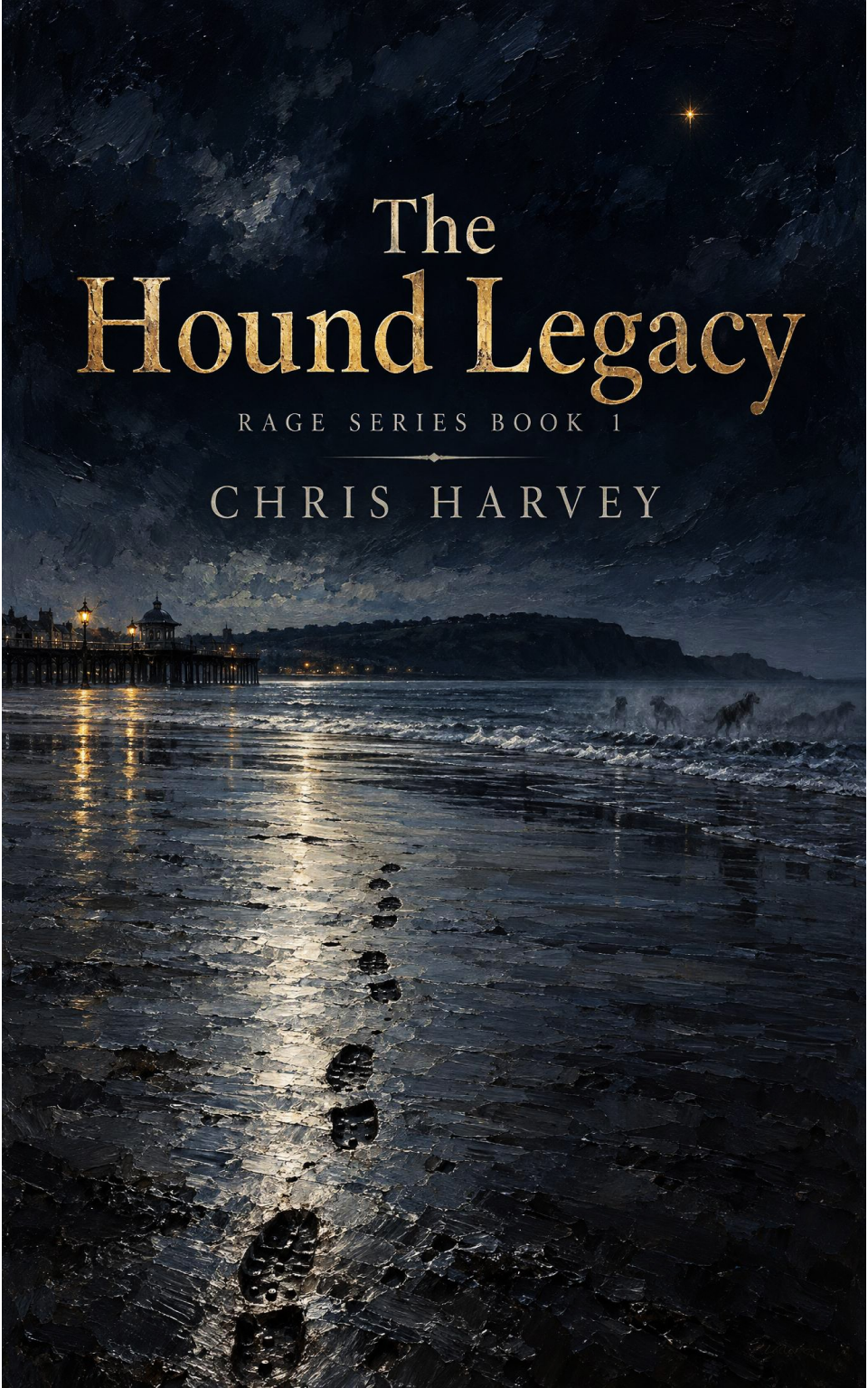

The
Hound Legacy
RAGE SERIES BOOK 1
CHRIS HARVEY

The Hound Legacy

Chris Harvey



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Chapter 1 – Bailey's Hotel

I was not there. I want that said plainly at the start, because a policeman who gives evidence on things he did not see is not much of a policeman, and I was one for thirty-one years.

What follows I had from Edward Harvey. He told it to me first on the night we gave ourselves a name, and he told it many times after, at kitchen tables and in the back bars of public houses from Paignton to Totnes. It never changed in any particular that mattered. Edward embroidered most things. He did not embroider this. I have come to think that was because, for once in his life, he did not understand what had happened to him, and a man does not decorate what he cannot make sense of.

So. Paignton, the back end of October, 1895.

Edward was a conductor on the Torquay Tramways then, twenty-six years old, with a brass company button on his coat and a callus on his right thumb from the ticket punch that he kept to the end of his days. Before the trams he had been a porter at Paignton station for three years. He still knew every man on that platform, and most of what came off the trains, and he still took his pint at Bailey's Hotel across Station Square after a late turn, because the porters did, and old habits are the hardest to sack.

He had come off the last car at the depot that evening, walked back along Torbay Road with the wind coming off the bay, and was sitting in the window of the public bar at Bailey's with his collar still damp. The gas was lit. The square outside was going blue with dusk. *Dimpsy*, we called it, and still do, that hour when the light goes out of things before the dark comes in.

The down train from Newton Abbot came in. Edward heard it and did not look up. Then, he said, he did look up, and he could never tell me why.

A tall man had come out of the station and was crossing Station Square. That was all. But he crossed it, Edward said, "like the square had been laid out for his convenience." He went between a cab and a brewer's dray without breaking his stride, stepped over a puddle without looking down at it, and came straight towards the window where Edward sat, as if he had known all along that Edward would be sitting in it.

He was thin, and very upright, and neat in a grey travelling coat and cloth cap. Clean-shaven. His linen was white. Edward noticed that particularly, because the next thing he noticed was the man's boots, and they were wrong. Good London boots, but there was grit packed into the welts, grey and glittering, the kind you only get off the moor. And when the man came into the bar and stood by Edward's table, there was a smell on him, very faint, under the London smell of soap and tobacco. Peat smoke.

"Mr Harvey," the man said. It was not a question.

Edward said he was.

"Mr Coombes, the stationmaster, tells me that for three years you carried every crate that came off the down line, and that you remember most of them. He also tells me you would be here, and in this chair, at about this hour. Mr Coombes is a precise man. May I sit?"

He sat before Edward could answer. He did not take off his cap at once. He looked at Edward instead, for perhaps three seconds, and Edward said it was like being read by a man who did not need his spectacles.

"You have left the railway for the trams," the man said. "Within the last year, I should think. The callus on your thumb is newer than the porter's shoulders. You carry your cash bag on the left hip and your coat has worn through to the lining there. You are unmarried, you lodge rather than keep a house, and you walked here from the depot along the sea front rather than through the town."

Edward asked him how he could possibly know the last part.

"There is salt drying on your left side and none on your right. The wind is from the south-east tonight." He took off his cap then. "Forgive me. It is a habit, and a bad one in company. My name is Holmes."

Edward told me he had heard the name. Everyone had, by then, even in Paignton. He said he had thought of a

hundred things to say, and said none of them, and bought the man a brandy and water instead, which Mr Holmes accepted and did not drink.

"I have a question for you about a crate," Holmes said. "A large one. Well ventilated. Heavier than its size would suggest, and noisy, though the noise would not have been of the kind a porter likes to hear. It would have come down the line some months ago, consigned to a gentleman with an address on Dartmoor. Perhaps under a name that meant nothing. Perhaps under no name at all."

Edward thought about it properly, because he could see that the man wanted it thought about properly. He went back through the summer in his head, the way porters can, by the weight of things in their arms. There had been a crate of fowls for a farm at Marldon. A piano that came in pieces for a house on Primley. A coffin, twice. Nothing that barked.

"Not through here, sir," he said at last. "Not to my knowing. And I'd have known. If 'twas a dog, the boys would've talked of nothing else."

Holmes nodded as if that was the answer he had expected and was a little sorry to get. "Then it came another way," he said, mostly to himself. "As I thought. Thank you, Mr Harvey. You have saved me a day." He began to rise.

And that is when Edward said the thing he would afterwards wish both that he had said sooner, and that he had never said at all.

"If 'tis big dogs you'm after, sir," he said, "you'm in the wrong place for one and the right place for a gert lot of 'em."

Holmes sat down again.

Edward told it badly, he admitted, because he had never told it all at once before, only in pieces, to the men on the trams and the girls in the bar, who laughed at him. He told it in the order it had happened to other people, which is the worst order there is.

There was Billy Narracott, who brought the milk in from Preston. Back in August, at dimpsy, his pony had stopped dead in the lane above the beach and would not go on for whipping or coaxing. Billy had looked where the pony was looking and seen grey backs going over the hedge. Four of them, he said. Low and quick, "like water going over a weir." No sound off them. He had sat in the lane with the cans rattling and his heart going for a quarter of an hour before the pony would move.

There was the howling. Three nights in September, off Roundham Head, heard as far up as Polsham Road. Long and rising, and then a second voice under the first, and a third. Not a dog's howl. Edward had heard dogs howl all his life and this was the same as a dog's the way a church bell is the same as a dinner bell.

"And the dogs of the town?" Holmes said. It was the first time he had interrupted. "When this howling was heard. What did they do?"

Edward had to think. Then he realised, sitting there in Bailey's with the gas hissing, a thing he had not noticed until that moment.

"Nothing, sir," he said. "They never answered. Not one of 'em. Every dog in Paignton'll bark at a cat on a wall, and they never made a sound."

Holmes said nothing to that. But Edward said his eyes changed, the way a man's eyes change when he hears his own name spoken across a crowded room.

Then there were the prints. That part Edward had seen with his own eyes, and he told it slowly. A Sunday morning in early October, low water, Goodrington sands. He had walked over with his sister's boys to look for crabs. There were tracks across the wet sand from the foot of the cliff. Big ones, bigger than his spread hand, four-toed, with the claw marks showing. Several animals. They went straight down the beach in a line, not wandering the way dogs wander, and they went into the sea.

"And came out again further along," said Holmes.

"No, sir. That's the thing. I walked the whole beach to the rocks both ways. They went in. They never come out."

"The tide?"

"Going out, sir. Had been since dawn. Anything that walked out of that water would've left a mark plain as print on a page."

Holmes was quiet for a long moment. Then he said, "Did you see these animals yourself, Mr Harvey? At any time?"

And Edward had to say no. He had heard them. He had seen what they left. He had never seen them.

"Then you have brought me a noise," Holmes said, not unkindly, "a milkman's fright, and a puzzle of the tide. A dog swims. A large dog swims well. A pack of half-starved strays turned off some farm, a fisherman's boat in the bay at the right moment, a frightened pony. I could build you three explanations before that brandy grows warm, and the dullest of them would most likely be true."

He stood up.

"I have one hound on my hands, Mr Harvey, and a man to hang with it if I can. I have no room for a pack. I am obliged to you for your time."

Edward said he felt as small as he had ever felt in his life. He also said, and this is the part he always told carefully, that Holmes did not leave at once. He stood by the table pulling on his gloves, finger by finger, and looked out of the window at the square, and at the dark coming down over the bay behind it, for longer than a man looks at anything he has dismissed.

"There is a friend of mine," Holmes said, "who believes me to be in London. I should like him to go on believing it a little longer. I would be grateful if you did not speak of this evening."

Edward promised. Then, because he was Edward, and could never let a door close without putting his foot in it, he said: "And if I hear more, sir? Where'm I to find 'ee?"

"Nowhere useful, I'm afraid." Holmes buttoned the second glove. And then he said, quite lightly, the way a man says *good night*:

"I would give you my mobile number, but that would do no good."

Edward said, "Your what, sir?"

Holmes stopped. Edward said it was a very small thing, and he could never describe it properly. It was the look of a man who has put his foot on a stair that is not there. It lasted no time at all.

"A London expression," Holmes said. "It means nothing whatever. Good night, Mr Harvey."

And he went out, and across Station Square the way he had come, between the cabs, without looking at the puddles, and into the station. A minute or two later the up train pulled out, and Edward sat with the untouched brandy and water in front of him and the strangest feeling, he said, that he had been talking with somebody who was not entirely there.

* * *

He went home late, along the sea front, the long way, because he did not want to go through the town and be talked to. The wind had dropped. The tide was coming in over the sand with

that small, regular sound it makes on still nights, like somebody breathing in the next room.

He had got as far as the pier when it started.

One voice, long and rising, from out over the water. Then a second, under the first. Then a third.

Edward stood still on the front with his hands in his pockets and listened, and he counted, he told me, because a man counts when he is frightened and has nothing else to do. He counted to forty before it stopped. And in all that time not one dog in Paignton barked.

What he could never get out of his head afterwards, and what he told me last of all, was the direction. He had always assumed, as everyone did, that whatever was howling was out on the moor, and that the sound came down to us over the hills on the wind.

It was not coming from the moor. It was coming from the sea.

When he got back to his lodgings he lit the lamp, took a tram waybill out of his coat, turned it over, and wrote down in pencil, as exactly as he could, the words Mr Sherlock Holmes had said to him at the door of Bailey's Hotel. He did not know why. He only knew that they had frightened him more than the howling.

I have held that waybill many times since. The pencil has gone silver with age. *I would give you my mobile number, but that would do no good.*

I did not understand those words when Edward first showed them to me, and I do not understand them now. But I have learned not to throw away the things I do not understand. Most of what happened to us afterwards began with them.

Chapter 2 – The Moor Still Howls

Holmes told me this part himself, once, and only once.

It was the winter after, in the back room at Bailey's, with the shutters up and the fire low and Edward asleep in his chair. I had asked him straight out why he had come back to Paignton at all, when he had been so certain the first time. I half expected him to refuse me. He did not refuse. But he told it the way he told everything that touched himself, which is to say as if it had happened to some other man of his acquaintance, whose conduct he did not entirely approve of.

I have read since then the account his friend published of the Baskerville business, and I will not go over that ground. Everyone knows how it ended. The fog on the moor, the great dog coming out of it with its jaws alight, the pistols, the beast dead on the path, and the naturalist gone into the Grimpen Mire in the night and never seen again. Holmes did not tell me any of that. He took it for granted that I had read it, and he was right.

What he told me was what came after, which is not in any book.

* * *

The morning after the hound was shot, they went into the Mire. Holmes, his friend, and the London detective who had

come down for the arrest and found he had nobody to arrest. They followed the naturalist's wands through the bog as far as the wands went, and found the old tin mine on the island in the middle of it, and the place where the dog had been kept. A chain. A staple in the wall. A tin of the stuff he had painted on it to make it shine. The bones of a small spaniel.

"It was all there," Holmes said to me, "and it was all exactly what I expected to find, and that should have been the end of it."

The London man was satisfied. He said so several times, I gathered, and wanted his train. Holmes put him on it the same afternoon, and his friend with him, and said he would follow by the evening train when he had settled a few small matters on the moor. His friend did not much like that, but he went. Holmes, I think, was not a man people argued with when he had decided to be alone.

He did not take the evening train. He did not take any train for three days.

I asked him what the small matters were.

"I did not know," he said. "That was the matter."

He had gone back to the stone hut on the hillside where he had hidden himself during the case, the one with the old roof and the hearth of three stones. Nobody knew he was there any longer. That suited him. He said he wanted, for one or two nights, to listen to the moor without having anything to listen for.

The first night there was nothing. Wind, and the sheep, and a curlew somewhere over towards the Mire, and once, very far off, the bell from the prison at Princetown.

The second night was cold and dead still. "Four degrees," he said, "perhaps less." Four degrees of what, he did not say, and I did not ask. It had been near enough freezing that week, all over Devon, and four degrees of anything I knew of would have been colder than any night I have ever spent out of doors. I only noticed it afterwards, the way you notice that a clock in another room has stopped. I wrote it down that same night. I have the page.

He had let the fire go out, he said, because he wanted to see the stars, and he was sitting in the doorway of the hut with his coat about him when it began.

One voice. Long, rising, falling away. Then a second under it. Then a third.

"I knew at once," he said, "that it was not an echo, because I know the moor's echoes, and that it was not a dog of any farm, because I know those too. I had spent a fortnight listening to every sound that hill could make. I had catalogued them. This was not among them."

He stood up. He did not take his pistol out, he told me, because there was nothing to point it at. The sound did not come from the Mire, where the hound had been kept, nor from the north, where the high moor was. It came from the

south and east. From the edge of the moor, and beyond it, where the land falls away towards the sea.

Towards Torbay.

He listened to it for a long time. And in all that time, he said, not a dog answered it. Not the dogs at the farms below the tor, which barked at every fox. Not the shepherd's collies at the cottages by the stream. Below him, he could just make out the shapes of the moor ponies in the starlight. They had all turned the same way. They stood with their heads up and did not move, not one of them, until the howling stopped.

"The hound was dead," Holmes said. "I had seen it dead. I had put my hand on it. I had watched them cart it away. I had found the chain it was kept on and the stuff it was painted with. And here was the moor howling at me as if none of it had happened."

He was quiet for a while then. The fire in the back room at Bailey's had burned right down. Edward snored.

"I am not often wrong, Hills," Holmes said at last. "I do not say that out of conceit. It is simply a fact, and a fact I have arranged my life around. When I am wrong, it is generally because I have made up my mind before the evidence was all in, and that is a sin I have warned other men against for twenty years." He turned his glass round on the table. "A young tram conductor sat in front of me in this very house and told me that the dogs of Paignton did not answer the howling. And I called it a noise, and a milkman's fright, and a

puzzle of the tide, and I went back to my one hound and my one murderer, because they were what I had come for. I did not want a pack. A pack would not fit."

I asked him what he did then.

"I sat in the doorway until dawn," he said. "I thought about Mr Harvey's prints on the sand going into the sea. And in the morning I walked down to Coombe Tracey and sent a telegram."

* * *

That telegram reached Edward two days later, at the Tramways depot, at a quarter past six in the morning, as he was signing on for the first car. A telegraph boy on a bicycle brought it, with his cheeks red from the cold and his eyes very round, because nobody at the depot had ever had a telegram that was not a death.

Edward opened it with the whole yard watching. I have it in front of me now, next to my pocketbooks. The paper has gone the colour of weak tea.

> HARVEY TRAMWAYS DEPOT PAIGNTON.
>
> I WAS WRONG ABOUT THE PACK. RETURN THURSDAY. BAILEYS SEVEN OCLOCK.
>
> FIND ONE CONSTABLE YOU WOULD TRUST WITH YOUR LIFE. TELL HIM NOTHING. BRING HIM.

SPEAK OF THIS TO NO ONE ELSE.

S H

The driver of the first car, a big slow Brixham man called Amos Pengelly, asked Edward if somebody had died. Edward said no, and put the telegram inside his shirt, against his skin, and took the car out to Torquay with his hands shaking so that he punched three tickets wrong before Preston.

He said afterwards that it was not the wolves that made his hands shake, nor even the great man coming back. It was the first line. He had read enough in the papers to know that Mr Sherlock Holmes did not say he was wrong. And here it was, in black capitals, paid for at so much a word.

He spent the whole of that day on the car going back and forth between Paignton and Torquay, and the whole of it thinking about the second line. One constable you would trust with your life.

Edward knew a good many constables. Most of them had moved him on from somewhere at one time or another. There was one in particular, though, who had once found Edward's purse on Torquay Strand with a week's wages in it, and walked a mile and a half out of his way at the end of a long night to bring it back to him, and would not take a shilling for his trouble. Edward had thought him a fool at the time.

That constable, as it turned out, was me.

Chapter 3 – The Constable

> *Thursday, 7th November 1895. 6.40 p.m. Off duty. Plain clothes. To Bailey's Hotel, Paignton, at the request of E. Harvey, tram conductor. Purpose not stated. Weather fine, cold, wind SE.*

That is the first entry in the pocketbook I kept for Rage. It is not my police pocketbook. That one belonged to the County, and went back to the County when I left, and for all I know it is mouldering in a cellar at Exeter. This one was my own. I bought it the next morning from a stationer's in Victoria Street for fourpence, and I kept it, and the ones that came after it, for the rest of my life.

I did not know, when I wrote that first line, that I was starting anything. I wrote it because I was a policeman, and a policeman writes things down. It is a habit, and like Holmes's habit of reading strangers, it is a bad one in company.

Now I had better say who I was, since up to this point I have only been a name in other men's stories.

I was John Hills, called Jack by everyone but my mother. I was twenty-eight years old and a constable of the County force, stationed at Paignton, with six years' service and no great prospects. I was born at Harberton, out past Totnes, the son of a farm labourer. I spoke the way Harberton speaks until the Force knocked it out of me, and it never quite

finished the job. I was a big man, slow to anger and slow to speak, which most people took for slow to think. I let them. It saved a great deal of argument.

My inspector was Thomas Robinson.

I will have a good deal to say about Inspector Robinson in this account, and I want to be fair to him at the start, because I was fond of him then. He was a handsome, easy, well-spoken man, a good deal cleverer than he let on, and popular with everybody who mattered. He dined at the big houses on Primley and up at Preston. He knew the names of the magistrates' wives and their dogs. He would stand you a drink, and remember your children's birthdays, and he had never once in six years spoken a hard word to me.

He had, however, told me to stop writing down wolves.

It was a small thing at the time. In the summer and autumn of that year I had taken, in the ordinary way of business, four reports that I could not account for. A ewe killed at Collaton, opened up like a parcel, and nothing eaten. A carter's horse bolted on the Totnes road and found next morning two miles off, standing in a field and trembling. A lady at Preston, a respectable woman, a curate's wife, who swore she had seen grey animals bigger than any dog on the lawn under her window at two in the morning. And Billy Narracott's pony. I wrote them all up in proper form and handed them in, as I was supposed to.

The third time, Robinson called me into his office, closed the door, offered me a cigarette, and told me kindly that I was making a fool of myself.

"Stray dogs, Jack," he said. "Half-starved lurchers turned off by the gypsies. A frightened woman and a frightened horse. You put the word *wolf* in an occurrence book and the next thing it's in the newspapers, and the next thing the visitors stop coming, and then the gentlemen who pay for this town come asking me why my constables are frightening away their money." He smiled. "Write *dogs*, if you must write anything. Better still, don't."

I wrote *dogs*. And I did not think much more about it, until I happened to go looking for my four reports a fortnight later, for a reason that does not matter now, and found that none of them was on the file.

I mentioned this to Robinson. He laughed, and said the clerks at Torquay would lose their own heads if they weren't screwed on, and that he'd look into it. I am sure he meant me to think that he did.

So when Edward Harvey caught me on the Wednesday at the bottom of Victoria Street, white as a sheet and full of himself, and said he could not tell me why, but would I come to Bailey's tomorrow at seven in my own clothes, and tell nobody, I said yes. I said yes more quickly than I expected to. I told myself it was curiosity. I think now that it was the four reports.

* * *

Bailey's was busy that night. There was a fair at Totnes, and the farmers coming back by train had stopped for one before they went home, and the public bar was all wet coats and pipe smoke and noise. Edward was in his usual window, sitting very straight with a pint he had not touched, looking at the station door as if it might bite him.

I sat down beside him. He said, without turning his head, "He'm not come."

"Who?"

"I'm not to say."

So we sat. The station clock across the square went seven, and then a quarter past. The up train came in and went out. Nobody came across the square.

At the next table was a commercial traveller. You could tell his trade at once, or I thought you could: a stout little man in a loud check suit gone shiny at the elbows, with a sample case at his feet, a red face, a waxed moustache and a Birmingham voice. He had been talking at the barmaid since before I came in. He sold buttons, by the sound of it, buttons and hooks and eyes, and he was very disappointed in the drapers of South Devon.

At twenty past seven the barmaid escaped him, and he turned his chair round to us instead.

"You gentlemen are local, I'll be bound," he said. "I can always tell. You've a look. Let me stand you something. No, I

insist. It's been a cruel week for buttons." He waved for the girl. Then he looked at me, longer than was polite, and lowered his voice. "And you, sir, if you'll forgive me. You're the police."

I said I was off duty.

"Oh, quite. Quite." He tapped the side of his nose. "No offence in the world. Only you have a constable's way of sitting, if you take my meaning. Back to the wall and an eye on the door." He leaned closer. His breath smelt of peppermint over something else. "Now here's a funny thing. I was in Torquay yesterday, and a gentleman I do business with there, a very substantial gentleman, he says to me, Purvis, he says, you're going to Paignton. If you happen across a sensible constable there, you might mention something to him."

Edward had gone very still beside me.

"There's talk," the traveller said, "about these dogs. Wolves, the silly folk call them. My gentleman doesn't care for the talk. It's bad for property. He'd like to know what's reported, d'you see. Who comes in asking. What's written down and what isn't. Nothing improper. Just to be kept informed. And he'd show his appreciation." He slid his hand across the table, and when he took it away there were two sovereigns on the wood between my pint and Edward's. "Monthly," he said. "Regular as rent."

Two sovereigns was more than I earned in a fortnight.

I pushed them back across the table with one finger. I said, "Put that away, Mr Purvis, before I take your name and address and the name of your substantial gentleman, and we finish this conversation at the station."

He did not put it away. He smiled at me, a sly, fat, pitying smile.

"Ah, now. Don't be like that. There's no harm in it. Your inspector, now, he's a man of the world. He takes it, and thinks none the worse of himself."

I have thought about the next few seconds many times since. I would like to say that I rose up in righteous anger to defend Thomas Robinson's good name. I did not. I sat there with the coins in front of me, and I thought about four reports that were not on the file, and I said nothing at all.

And then, because I was looking at the man's face to avoid looking at the money, I began to notice things.

The moustache was waxed so stiff it did not move when he spoke. His face was red, but red evenly, in a way a drinker's face is not. His hands were soft and clean, and a man who has spent twenty years opening sample cases has a nick or two across the knuckles and dirt under the thumbnail. And when he said *inspector*, the Birmingham went out of his voice for half a syllable, and something sharper and more educated looked out through the hole, and went back in again.

I looked down. His boots were under the table, by the sample case. They were good boots. Better than a button

traveller's. And there was grit packed into the welts, grey, glittering in the gaslight.

Edward had told me about grit like that, on the way to Bailey's. He had told me nothing about who we were meeting. But he had told me that.

"You've never sold a button in your life," I said. "And you've been up on the moor."

The traveller looked at me for a long moment. Then he took hold of his moustache, and peeled it off, and laid it on the table beside the sovereigns, like a dead mouse.

Edward said, "Lord 'a mercy."

"Good evening, Constable Hills," said Sherlock Holmes, in his own voice. "I apologise for Mr Purvis. He is a disagreeable man. I keep him for occasions like this."

* * *

We went into the back room. Holmes asked the landlord for it, by name, and got it, and a fire lit, which told me he had been in Bailey's more than once that week without Edward or anyone else knowing it. He scrubbed the red off his face with a handkerchief and a little water, and when he had done he was a different shape altogether: long and lean and grey-eyed and very tired.

"You will want to know," he said, "what that was for."

I said I would.

"Three questions. First, whether you could be bought. Mr Harvey assured me you could not, but Mr Harvey is an honest man, and honest men are poor judges of the price of others. Second, whether you would invent a story when you had none to tell. You did not ask what you were here for, and you did not pretend to know. Third, whether you would see what was in front of you. Most policemen do not. They see what they have been told is there." He paused. "You did all three. There was also a fourth question, which I did not intend to ask, and which you answered without speaking."

I knew what he meant. I felt my face go hot.

"When I spoke of your inspector," Holmes said, "I had no grounds whatever. It was bait, and cheap bait. I expected you to be angry. You were not angry. You were thinking. I should very much like to know what about."

I am a slow man, as I have said. I sat a long while with that question. I thought about my oath, and about Robinson's cigarettes and his kindness about my children, and about the County, which paid my wages and would put me out on the road the moment I disgraced it. And then I told Holmes about the four reports. The ewe and the horse and the curate's wife and Billy Narracott's pony. *Write dogs, if you must write anything*. And the file with nothing on it.

Holmes did not interrupt once. When I had done, he put his fingertips together and looked into the fire.

"So," he said quietly. "Someone wishes the wolves not to be written down. Not merely disbelieved. Removed." He looked up at me. "You understand, Hills, that I cannot go to your Chief Constable with this. I do not know who in this county I can go to. A man who can make a file disappear in Torquay may have friends at Exeter, and friends in the big houses, and friends in places I have not thought of yet. If I knock on the front door, whoever it is will hear the knock. I have no great love of official channels at the best of times. In this instance I think they lead straight back to the thing we are hunting."

"We," I said.

"If you are willing. It would be outside your duty. It might very well end your career, and I cannot promise you it will not end anything else. I will not think less of you if you go home now and forget this evening."

Edward was looking at me. He did not say anything. He did not need to.

I said, "I swore to keep the Queen's peace, Mr Holmes. I never swore to keep Inspector Robinson's."

Something happened then in Holmes's face that I would come to know well, though I saw it rarely. It was not a smile. It was the look of a man who has been carrying a heavy thing alone for some distance and has felt someone take the other end.

"Then you will do," he said.

He glanced down at his left wrist, as if there were something there, though there was nothing but his cuff. Then he took a watch out of his waistcoat pocket instead, and looked at that. I noticed it, the way I had noticed the boots. I did not know what I had noticed. I wrote it down anyway, later that night.

"It is late, and Mr Harvey has a car to take out at six," Holmes said. "Tomorrow evening there will be three of us. Mr Harvey has promised me a public house where nobody listens. And on Saturday there will be four."

"Who's the fourth?" said Edward.

Holmes put his watch away. "A specialist," he said.

"In what, sir?"

He thought about it longer than the question seemed to deserve.

"In everything, I sometimes think," said Holmes. "Good night, gentlemen."

> *11.10 p.m. Home. Met S. Holmes at Bailey's, with E. Harvey. Offered 2 sovs by "Purvis" (S.H. in disguise). Refused. Told S.H. of the four reports and Insp. R. Agreed to assist. Outside duty. S.H. looked at his wrist for the time. No watch there. Fourth person to come Saturday. A specialist.*

Chapter 4 – Rage

Friday, 8th November 1895. 8 p.m. Off duty.
Cider house, top of Winner Street, Paignton.
S.H., E.H., self. Rain.

Edward's public house where nobody listened was not a public house at all, strictly speaking. It was the front room of a cottage at the top of Winner Street, in the old part of Paignton, where the streets are narrow and crooked and were there long before anybody thought of building a pier. There was no name over the door. There was no sign of any kind. There was a barrel on a trestle, three benches, a fire, a smell of apples and wet dog, and Mrs Luscombe.

Mrs Luscombe was Edward's great-aunt on his mother's side. She was more than eighty years old and as deaf as the church tower. She had been selling her own cider out of that front room since before the railway came, without a licence, and every constable in Paignton had known it for forty years and drunk there off duty, myself included. She could not have heard a word we said if we had shouted it in her ear. She also, Edward told us proudly, could not read.

"Then she is the ideal landlady," said Holmes, and bowed to her. Mrs Luscombe looked him up and down, decided he wanted feeding, and went out to the back to find him some bread and cheese whether he wanted it or not.

He was in his own clothes that night, a long grey coat dark with rain, and he looked out of place in that room the way a heron looks out of place in a farmyard. He sat on the bench nearest the fire with his long legs folded up nearly to his chin, and accepted a mug of Mrs Luscombe's cider, and drank some of it, and put it down with great care, as though it might go off.

"It is very strong," he observed.

"'Tis Harberton apples," I said. "She has 'em sent in."

He gave me a quick look at that, and I could see him putting it away somewhere for later.

* * *

For the first hour it was business, and Holmes did most of the talking.

He began by telling us everything he knew, which surprised me. I had expected him to be close, the way great men are supposed to be close. He was not. He went through it all, plainly and in order, like a sergeant giving evidence. Edward's milkman and Edward's prints going into the sea. My four reports and the empty file. The howling on the moor, and the ponies, and the dogs that would not answer. He told us about the hound, and the man who had kept it, and how the man had bought it in London and brought it down by train and kept it chained on an island in a bog, and how none of

that, none of it, explained a single thing that Edward or I had told him.

"One dog," he said, "bought from a dealer in the Fulham Road. One. I am entirely certain of it. I have seen the receipt. Whatever is in Torbay did not come from the same shop."

"Then where did they come from, sir?" said Edward.

"I have no idea," said Holmes, and for a moment he looked almost pleased about it. "None. That is what makes them interesting. But I will tell you what I think matters more. Somebody in this bay knows they are here and does not want it known. Somebody can make a constable's reports go missing in Torquay. That is not a wolf. That is a man, or several men, with influence. I can do nothing about the wolves. I may be able to do something about the men."

He put his mug down.

"I cannot stay in Devon," he said. "Not for long at a time. I have obligations in London that will not wait, and the longer I am seen here the more people will wonder why. That means I need eyes here when I am not. Two kinds of eyes." He looked at Edward. "Mr Harvey, your trams run every road between Torquay and Paignton, from first light until late. You know every driver and conductor on the line. They know every regular passenger. Passengers talk. Conductors listen, whether they want to or not. I want everything strange that is seen or said on those cars to come to you, and through you to

me. Sightings. Rumours. Who has sold land in a hurry and who has bought it. Who goes where at odd hours."

Edward said he could do that, and his face went pink with pleasure.

"Hills," said Holmes, "you are the other kind. You see the town from the inside. Reports, complaints, the occurrence books, the gossip of the station. Who your inspector dines with. Which magistrate takes an interest in which case. You will need to be very careful. You are the one of us who can lose the most."

I said I knew that.

"Then there is the matter," said Holmes, "of how we speak to one another."

He explained it. Letters could be opened, at the sorting office or the hall table. Telegrams were worse. Every word went through a clerk, and the clerks in a town like Paignton knew everybody's business and talked about it. He had used a code with men in London before, he said, numbers and letters, but a coded telegram arriving at a tram depot would be more talked about than a plain one.

"What I want," he said, "is a way of saying what we mean that sounds like nothing at all."

It was Edward who looked at me. Not Holmes. Holmes, I think, had already seen it, and wanted it to come from one of us.

"Jack," Edward said. "Talk like your gran."

I knew what he meant. Harberton is not five miles from Totnes, and it might as well be the moon. The old people there had a way of talking that was their own, not just Devon but Harberton Devon, with words that nobody in Paignton used and some that nobody outside the parish had ever heard. My grandmother spoke nothing else. My mother spoke it at home and something nearer the Queen's English at the shop. I had spoken it until I was eighteen and joined the Force, and a sergeant at Exeter had spent two years beating it out of my mouth with sarcasm. Edward's mother came from out that way too, and his gran, and he had more of it than he let on.

So I talked like my gran.

I said a few lines about the weather and the price of pigs, the way she would have said them, and Holmes sat forward on the bench with his eyes half shut and listened. When I had done, he asked me to say it all again, slower. Then he asked what one word meant, and then another, and then he made me say *zummat* and *nort* three times each, and he said them back to me.

He was terrible at it. I want that in the record, because there were not many things Sherlock Holmes was terrible at, and I had very little time to enjoy them. He had a good ear but a London mouth, and every word came out like a bishop trying to talk to a cowman. Edward laughed so hard he had to put his cider down. Even Mrs Luscombe, who could not hear a thing, laughed, because she could see Edward.

Holmes took it very well. "I have some small interest in the old speech of the West," he said. "I had no idea it was quite so hostile to the human tongue. Again, Hills. *Where's it to?*"

We were at it for an hour. By the end of it we had the beginnings of a code, and it was a good one, because it did not look like a code at all. It looked like two country fellows writing to each other about nothing much.

The wolves were *the dimpsy dogs*, because they came at dusk. A sighting was *the dogs were out*. Inspector Robinson, after some argument, was *the Squire's man*, because that was what Edward said he was. A meeting at Mrs Luscombe's was *zider at Gran's*. Somebody frightened or lying was *mazed*. Anything that seemed wrong but could not be proved was *not vitty*. Holmes himself was to be *Maister*, which he disliked, and which therefore stuck.

"And if someone reads it," I said, "they'll just think we're a pair of yokels."

"Precisely," said Holmes. "Nobody has ever been suspected of anything for being a yokel. It is the most perfect disguise in England."

* * *

Mrs Luscombe filled the mugs again, and again. I do not know how many times. The fire burned down and somebody built it up, and the rain came on harder against the little window. It

was the first evening in a long while that I had laughed, and I think it was the same for Edward, and I suspect it was the same for Holmes, though I would never have said so to his face.

It was late, and we were all three of us somewhat the worse for Harberton apples, when Edward got on to the subject of Inspector Robinson.

He did not like Robinson. He never had. Robinson had once moved him on from outside the Gerston Hotel when he was a porter, in front of a party of visitors, and called him *boy*. Now Edward had heard about the four reports and the empty file, and he went on about it at some length, going pinker and pinker. About Robinson and his cigarettes and his dinners on Primley. About the gentlemen who thought they owned the bay, and very likely did. About how they'd sell the whole of Torbay from Hope's Nose to Berry Head to the first man with a cheque book, wolves and all, and never ask a poor man's leave.

"It puts me in a proper rage," Edward said, and banged the table so the mugs jumped. "That's what 'tis. A proper rage."

There was a pause.

Then Holmes said, very solemnly, "We need a name."

We looked at him.

"For the telegrams," he said. "A signature. Something that means nothing to a clerk. I suggest Mr Harvey's word."

"Rage?" I said.

"Rage," said Holmes. "Four letters. Very cheap to telegraph."

I started laughing first, and then Edward, and then Holmes did too, properly, for the only time I ever heard it, a sudden bark of a laugh that he seemed surprised by. Mrs Luscombe came in from the back to see what the matter was and found the three of us helpless on her benches, and shook her head, and went out again.

That was all it was. A joke, and too much cider, and a word Edward said because he was cross. I want that understood by anyone who reads this, because over the years I have heard people say all sorts of things about where the name came from. They are all wrong. It came from Edward losing his temper about a policeman who called him *boy*.

And it stuck. We said it as a joke for a week, and then without thinking for a month, and after that it was simply what we were.

* * *

We left together a little after midnight. The rain had stopped. Winner Street was black and shining and empty, and the air smelt of the sea.

At the bottom of the hill Edward went off towards his lodgings, singing, and Holmes and I stood for a moment at the corner.

"He is a good man," said Holmes, looking after him.

"He is."

"So are you, Hills. I hope you will not regret this." He turned up his collar. Then he said, almost to himself, "Rage. It is absurd. It will outlive all three of us, of course."

I asked him how he could possibly know that.

He looked at me for a moment as if he were deciding something.

"Call it a deduction," he said. "Tomorrow, Hills. Bailey's, at four. Bring Mr Harvey, and both your wits. You will need them for the fourth member."

And he walked off down towards the station with his long stride, and the dark took him.

12.20 a.m. Home. Code agreed: dimpsy dogs = wolves. Squire's man = Insp. R. Zider at Gran's = meeting. Maister = S.H. Name for telegrams: RAGE (E.H.'s word). S.H. says it will outlive us all. Asked how he knows. "Deduction." Not vitty.

CHAPTER 5 – Ania

Saturday, 9th November 1895. 3.50 p.m. Off duty. Bailey's Hotel. S.H., E.H., self. Clear and very cold. Frost coming.

I have tried for a great many years to write down what I thought of Ania when I first saw her. I have filled pages with it and burned them. The trouble is that everything I know about her now gets in the way of what I knew then, which was almost nothing. So I will set down only what happened, as near as I can, and let it stand.

Holmes was waiting for us on the pavement outside Bailey's when Edward and I came across the square. It was a still, bitter afternoon, the kind that comes in November when the wind drops and the sky goes the colour of a pewter plate. The sun was nearly down behind the station roof. We were all three of us breathing smoke like engines.

"The four o'clock from Newton," Holmes said. "Come."

We went over to the station. The train was in. It was a short one, three coaches, and there were not many people on it: a farmer and his wife with a basket of ducks, two schoolboys, a clergyman, a commercial traveller who for all I knew was Holmes's Mr Purvis again. They came through the gate one by one and Holmes did not look at any of them.

Then the platform was empty, and the porter was slamming doors, and a young woman came through the gate.

She was not on the platform and then she was. That is what I remember. I had been watching the gate, because Holmes was watching it, and I would have sworn on oath that there was nobody left on that platform but the porter. And yet there she was, coming through, as though she had been the last off and had only been a little slow with her bag.

She was perhaps twenty-five. Not tall. Dark-haired, plainly dressed in a dark grey travelling costume with no ornament to it at all, and a small hat, and a carpet bag. She was neither pretty nor plain. I have heard Edward say she was beautiful, and I have heard other men who met her afterwards say there was nothing to her. I think both were true, depending on whether she was looking at you.

She was looking at Holmes. She came straight to him across the booking hall, and stopped, and they looked at each other for a moment without a word. It was not the look of two people meeting. It was the look of two people checking something.

Then Holmes said, "You found the train."

And she said, "I found the train."

That was all. He did not take her hand or her bag. He turned to us.

"Mr Edward Harvey. Constable John Hills. This is Ania."

I waited for the surname. There was none. I learned soon enough that there never would be. In all the years I knew her, she was Miss Ania to the landladies, and Ania to us, and on the one occasion I saw a form she had filled in, the line for the surname had been left perfectly blank.

"Mr Harvey," she said, and turned her eyes to Edward. "Mr Hills." And to me.

Her voice was low and pleasant and very clear. There was an accent in it that I could not place. It was not French, which I had heard from the hotel waiters at Torquay, nor German, nor Irish. If anything it was no accent at all, as though she had learned to speak English from a book that had been very carefully written.

"She is Polish," said Holmes, "if anyone should ask."

I noticed that he did not say she was Polish. He said that she was Polish if anyone should ask.

We went out of the station and across the square to Bailey's, the four of us, in the last of the light. I was walking a little behind, and as we passed under the lamp by the cab rank I happened to look at the others. Edward was blowing on his hands, his breath going up in clouds. Holmes was walking fast with his chin in his collar and a thin plume of breath trailing back over his shoulder. I could see my own in front of my face.

Ania's mouth was a little open, as though she were about to speak. Nothing came out of it at all.

I told myself she was holding her breath against the cold. Some people do. I put it out of my mind. I wrote it down that night, because I wrote everything down, and then, I want to be honest, I did not think about it again for a long time.

* * *

Holmes had the back room again, and a fire, and the landlord brought tea, because Ania asked for it. She asked for it very politely, and when it came she poured it, and held the cup, and sat with it in her two hands for the next hour and a half, and never once raised it to her lips. When we left, it was full and stone cold.

Holmes gave Edward and me no explanation of who she was, beyond what he had already said at the station. He did not tell us where she had come from, or how he knew her, or why. When Edward, who had less sense than I had, asked him straight out, he only said, "Ania is a specialist. I trust her entirely. You may do the same."

"A specialist in what, sir?"

Holmes looked at her, and she looked at him, and I had the very strong feeling that a short conversation had taken place that Edward and I were not part of.

"Ania knows a great deal about animals," Holmes said. "And languages. And history, and the habits of crowds, and a number of other things. You will find, I think, that she learns very quickly."

We found it out within the quarter hour.

Holmes told her about the code. He told it badly, on purpose I think, mangling *zummat* and *where's it to* so that Edward snorted. Then he asked me to say for her what I had said for him the night before: the weather and the price of pigs, the way my grandmother said them.

I did. Ania listened.

I have said that Holmes listened with his eyes half shut. Ania listened with hers wide open, fixed on my mouth, and she did not blink. Not once, all the while I was speaking. I noticed it about halfway through, and it put me off so that I stumbled over a word, and she did not blink at that either.

When I had done, she said, "Again, please. The second part only." I said the second part again. She nodded.

Then she spoke.

She said the whole thing back to me. Every word of it, in the right order, with the stumble taken out. But that was not what made the hair stand up on the back of my neck. It was the voice. It was not a young Polish woman's voice saying Harberton words. It was my grandmother's. The same lift at the end of the line, the same way of leaning on the first word as though it were a gate she was pushing open. The same little catch in the throat on *zummat*, that my grandmother had because of a cough she had had since the cholera year.

I had not done the catch. I am certain of it. I had not done it because I did not know I knew it.

Edward said, "Lord 'a mercy," for the second time in three days.

"Was that correct?" said Ania.

I said it was. I could not say anything else.

"Thank you," she said, in her own voice again, as though nothing had happened at all. "It is a very good code, Mr Hills. Nobody will understand it. Except the people from Harberton." She tilted her head a little. "Are there many people from Harberton in Torquay?"

"Not many, miss. A few in service. My—"

"Your cousin at the Imperial," said Ania. "In the kitchens."

I had been about to say exactly that. I had not mentioned my cousin to anybody in Paignton in a twelvemonth. I looked at Holmes. Holmes was filling his pipe and did not look up.

* * *

It was Ania who brought up the dragon.

We had been talking for some time about the difficulty of the thing. Holmes had laid it out, as he liked to, step by step. Rage would need to watch certain places. The beaches where the tracks were found. The lanes where the sightings were. The caves along the cliffs at Torquay. We would need to meet in places where we would not be seen meeting. And we did not want the town getting interested. If people started going out at night with lanterns and shotguns to look for wolves,

they would trample every track, frighten off every witness, and very likely get somebody killed. And whoever had made my four reports disappear would hear of it, and know there were people asking.

"What we need," said Holmes, "is for people to stay at home after dark, and keep away from certain places, and not ask why."

"Then give them a reason they already believe," said Ania. "People will not go where their grandmothers told them not to go."

"Nobody's gran ever told 'em not to go to Goodrington," said Edward.

"Not yet," said Ania.

And she told us about the dragon.

I will set it down here the way she told it that first time, as near as I can, because it was told a hundred different ways afterwards, by a hundred different mouths, and I want this one on record. She told it sitting very upright with her cold tea in her hands, looking into the fire, in a soft level voice like somebody reading aloud.

Long ago, she said, before there was any England, there was a great Emperor in the sky in China, the Jade Emperor, who ruled over everything. There were four great dragons in that country who had displeased him, and he trapped them, each one under a mountain, where they lie to this day. The

other dragons were very much afraid. They did not know who would be next.

One of them was a she-dragon, and she was not willing to wait to find out. She went west. She flew over deserts and mountains and seas, further than any dragon had ever gone. But she was not alone. Behind her came a thing called a taowu, which was sent after her, or perhaps only followed her of its own accord. It was not a friendly creature.

"What's a taowu, miss?" said Edward.

Ania turned her head and looked at him. "Something that does not give up," she said, and turned back to the fire.

The dragon flew faster and faster to escape it. She grew wings to fly faster still, though dragons in China have no wings. And when she came to the end of the land, her strength was so great that it tore the land in two, and the sea came rushing in between. That was how the Channel was made, between England and France. And where she came in from the sea, the cliffs broke open in front of her like a mouth, and that was Tor Bay.

She flew in at the mouth of the bay and went to ground under the moor. And she is there still, under Dartmoor, under the granite. The granite is the only thing in the world hard enough to keep the taowu from her. And sometimes, on still nights, you can hear her breathing through the holes in the rocks, at the old places where the ground goes down into the dark.

When she had done, nobody spoke for a while.

Then Edward said, "A Chinee dragon. In Paignton." He did not say it scornfully. He said it the way a child says a thing over to fix it in its head.

"She will need a name," said Holmes.

"Longpei," said Ania at once. "*Long* is the Chinese for a dragon. *Pei* is for Paignton." She looked at me. "It is easy to say. It will sound old in a Devon mouth."

"There's no such story," I said. "Nobody in Devon ever heard such a story."

"No," said Ania. "But they will have heard it by Christmas, and by Easter their grandmothers will have told it to them."

* * *

We planned it there and then, the four of us. Ania would make something old: a printed sheet, a ballad or a broadside of the kind they used to sell at fairs, that might be found in a drawer or the back of a Bible. Edward would tell the story on the trams, to the drivers and the regulars and the children, a little at a time, as something his gran used to say. I would let it slip in the bars and the station, sounding as if I thought it was nonsense, which is the surest way of making a story travel. And the places where the dragon breathed would be the places Rage needed people to keep away from: the caves at

Kents Cavern, the cliff at Daddyhole, and a hollow among the rocks at Hound Tor that Holmes had seen on the moor.

Holmes listened to all of it and said very little. At the end, he said, "You understand that we are telling lies. To frighten people."

"To keep people safe," said Ania.

"That is what liars generally say," said Holmes. But he did not stop us.

I think of that exchange often now. I did not think much about it then.

* * *

Holmes had arranged lodgings for her with Mrs Luscombe in Winner Street, and I was told to walk her up there with her bag, while he went to see Edward to his tram. It was full dark by then and the frost was coming down hard. The stars were out over the bay.

She walked beside me without speaking for the first part of the way. At the bottom of Winner Street I asked her, because I could not help it, where she had come from that day.

"From London?"

"No," she said.

"From Poland, then. Originally."

She walked on a few steps. Then she said, "I am from not very far from here, Mr Hills. Only a long way from now."

I took it for a foreigner's muddle with English. I said something polite. We went up the hill to Mrs Luscombe's, and Mrs Luscombe took one look at her and went to find her some bread and cheese, and I left them there.

On the Monday, out of habit, I asked old Coombes at the station whether he had seen a young lady in grey off the four o'clock on Saturday. He had not. Nor had the porter on duty, nor the boy who took the tickets. There had been a farmer and his wife, two boys, a parson, and a traveller. There had been no young lady.

They had a ticket for every soul off that train. They did not have one for her.

> *Sat. 11.30 p.m. Home. The fourth member: "Ania." No surname. "Polish, if anyone asks." Speaks Harberton like Gran. Knew of cousin at the Imperial. Never told her. Tea not drunk. Story of a dragon: LONGPEI. And a "taowu": something that does not give up. Lodged at Mrs L's. Says she is from near here, a long way from now. Very cold tonight. Her breath did not show.*

Chapter 6 – Paignton Sands

Tuesday, 26th November 1895. 6.55 a.m. On duty. Called to Paignton sands, below the Esplanade, by W. Tozer, bait digger. Body of a man at the tide line. Low water 7.12. Wind W, light. Fog on the bay.

I had heard the howling the night before. I want to put that first, because everything else follows from it.

I was on nights that week, walking the beat along the front from the pier to Roundham, and a little after two in the morning I heard it from somewhere out in the fog. One voice, long and rising. Then two. Then three. I stood under a lamp on the Esplanade with my hand on my truncheon, as if that would have been any use, and listened to it until it stopped. I counted, the way Edward had. I got to thirty-one. Not one dog in Paignton barked.

In the morning, at the end of my turn, Billy Tozer came running up the beach steps with his bait fork still in his hand and his face the colour of a fish's belly, and could not speak at first, and then could not stop.

* * *

I am going to describe what I found on Paignton sands that morning plainly and once. I will not describe it again in this account. I have seen a good many dead men since, in a long

career, some of them in a very bad way. I have never seen anything like that again, and I hope that whoever reads this never does.

He lay at the edge of the tide, where the wet sand meets the dry, about a hundred and fifty yards south of the pier. The fog had not lifted, and the first thing I saw of him through it was his boots, side by side, very neat, toes up, as if he had lain down to sleep. Then the rest of him came out of the grey.

He was on his back, with his face turned towards the sea. His eyes were open. He was a man of perhaps forty, clean-shaven, in a good brown suit and a covert coat. His hands were clenched at his sides, and both of them were full of sand, as though at the end he had tried to hold on to the beach.

His throat had been torn out.

There is no other way to say it. It was not cut. It was torn, and there were other wounds, on his arms and on his chest where the coat had been ripped open, long wounds in sets of three and four, deep enough that I could see the white of the bone in one forearm. His coat and waistcoat were in rags. One sleeve was gone altogether and I never found it.

I stood over him for what felt like a long time, in the fog, with Billy Tozer being sick into the sand behind me. I could hear the little waves coming in. I could hear the gulls starting up on the pier. I remember thinking, very clearly and stupidly, that I must not let the tide reach him, and then thinking that

the tide was going out, and then thinking that I did not know what to do with my hands.

Then I did what I had been trained to do, which saved me. I sent Billy up to the station for the sergeant and the doctor. And while I waited, I took out my pocketbook, both of them, and I began to write down what I saw.

* * *

These are the things I wrote down before anybody else arrived. I am copying them from the pocketbook, the private one, in the order I wrote them.

Watch in waistcoat pocket, gold, going. 7.02. Purse in coat, 3 sovs and silver. Not robbery.

Inside breast pocket of coat torn open. Empty. Lining cut, not torn. Clean edge.

Pencil in waistcoat. No notebook. Man of his kind carries a notebook.

Very little blood on sand beneath him. Very little anywhere. His wounds should have bled a great deal.

Tracks.

The tracks were all round him. Big four-toed prints with the claws showing, bigger than my hand spread out, pressed deep into the wet sand. They circled the body, two or three times round, close, and then they went off in a line, straight down the beach, to the edge of the water. And there they stopped.

I walked along the water's edge, north and south, as far as I dared go and still keep an eye on him, as Edward had done at Goodrington. I found nothing. They went into the sea. They did not come out.

I knew the tide would be turning within the hour, and when it came back up it would wipe the whole beach clean. So I knelt on the wet sand, and in the private pocketbook I drew the prints. Not well. I am no artist. But I drew a dozen of them, one after another, as carefully as I could, each one with its distance from the last, pacing it out with my own boots, and its width across with my rule. I drew the circle round the body. I drew the line to the sea.

I do not know why I did it. Holmes said afterwards that it was the most useful thing anybody did that whole winter. I think I did it because I was frightened, and drawing them gave me something to look at that was not his face.

There was one other thing, and I nearly missed it. About thirty yards up the beach, towards the sea wall, there were three ranging poles standing upright in the sand in a line, red and white, the kind surveyors use. Beside the furthest one lay a measuring chain, coiled very neatly, and a wooden tripod with nothing on it.

So he had been a surveyor. He had come down onto the beach to measure something, with his poles and his chain and his instrument. The instrument was gone, and so was his

notebook. And whatever had done this to him had left his gold watch in his pocket, and walked into the sea.

* * *

The sergeant came, and the doctor, old Dr Hext from Palace Avenue, with his bag and his nightshirt showing under his overcoat. And twenty minutes after them, which surprised me, because it was barely half past seven and he lived up at Preston, came Inspector Robinson.

He was shaved and dressed and perfectly turned out. He came down the beach steps quickly, and stopped when he saw the body, and I saw his face change. I have thought a great deal about that change since. At the time I took it for horror, and perhaps it was. He stood there a moment with his gloved hand over his mouth. Then he said, quite quietly, as if to himself:

"Oh, poor Venning."

Nobody had told him the man's name. Nobody knew it. There was nothing on the body that gave it, no card, no letters. I had been through every pocket. I said nothing. I wrote it down later.

After that he was all business. He was very good at business. He sent the sergeant to keep back the people who were starting to gather on the Esplanade, because the fog was lifting and the early walkers were out. He had Dr Hext make his examination quickly and the body covered. He asked me

for my report and I gave it to him, the watch and the purse and the tracks going into the sea, and he listened gravely and nodded.

"Dogs," he said, when I had done. "A pack of them. God help us, Jack, it's what I've been afraid of. Strays gone wild on the moor and come down for the winter. The poor devil must have come down to finish some work at first light and walked straight into them."

"There was very little blood, sir," I said. "Under him."

"Then the tide took it."

"The tide's been going out all night, sir."

He looked at me for a moment. Not angrily. Kindly, almost. "Dogs, Jack," he said. "You'll write dogs, and the coroner will find dogs, and the Council will put up a reward for any dog shot within the parish, and the visitors will read about it in the newspaper and think it's a sad accident, which it is. And no one will say *wolves*, and no one will frighten anybody. Do you understand me?"

I said I understood him.

By half past eight the body had gone up to the mortuary on a handcart under a sheet. By nine the tide had turned, and the water came creeping back over the sand, and by ten there was nothing on Paignton beach but three red and white poles standing in the shallows, and a crowd on the Esplanade looking at them. Robinson had the poles taken up before noon.

The dead man was Peter Venning, a land surveyor of Southernhay, Exeter, lodging at a house on the Esplanade. He had been engaged for a month, his landlady said, surveying the foreshore from the pier down to Goodrington on behalf of a company that was planning a new promenade, and perhaps a tramway extension along the sea front. She did not know the name of the company. She had never met anyone from it. He had paid his rent a month in advance in gold. He had gone out after supper the night before with his instrument case, and said he had some readings to take by the stars, and would not be late.

The company, when I found it, was called the Bay Estates Company. It had an office, which was a brass plate on a door in Union Street, Torquay, and a secretary, who was a solicitor's clerk. Nobody could tell me who owned it. I made a note of that, too.

* * *

I got word to Edward by noon. I did not need the code: everybody in Paignton knew by then that a man had been killed on the beach. But I sent it in the code anyway, by one of his tram boys, because Holmes had told us to practise. *Dogs was out last night. Zider at Gran's, seven.*

Holmes came on the evening train. He had been in Exeter, he said, and had read it in the afternoon paper. I do not know how he got from Exeter to Paignton as quickly as he

did. He was waiting in Mrs Luscombe's front room with Ania when Edward and I came in, and he had my drawing in his hand before I had my coat off.

I told them all of it. The howling at two in the morning, the body, the watch and the purse, the cut lining, the missing notebook, the blood that was not there. Robinson saying *poor Venning* before anyone knew who he was. *Write dogs*. The Bay Estates Company and its brass plate.

Holmes listened without moving. When I came to Robinson and the name, his eyes went to Ania for a moment, and back.

"The blood," he said, when I had finished. "You are quite sure."

"Quite sure, sir. A man torn up like that. It should have been everywhere."

"Then he did not die where you found him," said Holmes. "He died somewhere else, and bled somewhere else, and was carried to the tide line afterwards and laid out on his back with his boots together, facing the sea. A pack of animals does not tidy its kill, Hills. Nor does it cut open a man's coat lining with a knife, nor take his notebook and his theodolite and leave his gold."

Edward said, "Then it weren't the dogs."

"I did not say that."

All this while Ania had been sitting beside the fire with my drawing spread across her knees. She had not looked up once. Now she put one finger on the page.

"This one," she said. "And this one. And this, and this, and this." She touched one print after another, all down the line I had drawn to the sea. "These are all the same foot."

I said they would be, since they were all the same animal.

"No," said Ania. "An animal that walks has four feet, Mr Hills. Left fore, right fore, left hind, right hind. They are not the same. They differ in size, and in the spread of the toes, and in the angle, and in how deep they go. You have drawn each of these very carefully. Each one is a left forefoot. The same left forefoot. Twelve times. And the distance between them is the same every time, to within the length of your boot." She looked up at me. Her eyes did not blink. "Nothing alive walks like that."

The fire spat. Mrs Luscombe, in her chair in the corner, went on placidly with her knitting.

"Then what made 'em?" said Edward.

Nobody answered him.

"But you heard the howling," Ania said to me, quite gently. "At two o'clock."

"I did."

"And the dogs of the town did not answer."

"No."

She nodded slowly, as though I had confirmed something for her, and looked into the fire. "They were there," she said. "Not on the beach. Not close to him. But they were there. Out on the water, or near it. They came to look."

I asked her how in God's name she could know that.

She did not answer. Holmes did, instead.

"It means, Hills," he said, folding my drawing very carefully and putting it inside his coat, "that we have two problems where we thought we had one. There are animals in this bay that nobody can explain. And there is a man, or men, who has found them very useful." He looked round at the three of us in the firelight. "I am not sure yet which of the two frightens me more."

> *11.50 p.m. Home. A. Venning, surveyor, Exeter. Throat torn. Little blood. Killed elsewhere (S.H.). Notebook and instrument gone, gold left. Tracks into sea: all one left forefoot (Ania). Insp. R. knew his name before any of us. Bay Estates Co., Union St, Torquay. Owner unknown. Howling at 2 a.m. Ania says they came to look.*

CHAPTER 7 – The Pocketbook

Friday, 29th November 1895. Inquest on A. Venning. Verdict: death by misadventure, attacked by dogs. Insp. R. gave evidence. Dr Hext "not able to say with certainty" what animal. Not asked about the blood. I was not called.

They held the inquest in the long room of a hotel on the front, as they did in those days, with the coroner at a baize table under the window and the jury on two rows of dining chairs, and the sea going on outside as if nothing had happened.

I sat at the back in uniform. I had expected to be called, since I was the first officer on the scene and had made the first report. I was not called. Inspector Robinson gave the police evidence instead, from my report, which he had read out very handsomely, leaving out the blood and the cut lining and the notebook. He did not leave anything out that was untrue. He simply did not put it in.

Dr Hext was called. He was an honest old man and he did not like it. He said that the injuries were consistent with an attack by large dogs. The coroner asked him whether they could have been caused by any other animal. Dr Hext took off his spectacles and polished them and said he was not able to say with certainty. The coroner asked him what other animal he had in mind. Dr Hext said he had no other animal in mind.

He put his spectacles back on and did not look at anyone for the rest of the morning.

The jury were out for eleven minutes. Death by misadventure. Attacked by dogs.

The next day the Local Board offered a reward of five shillings for every stray dog shot within the parish, the tail to be brought to the police station as proof. For a fortnight after that I had men coming into the station every morning with tails in paper parcels. Most of them were from farm dogs that had wandered. One was from a little rough-haired terrier that belonged to a widow in Fisher Street, who came in the same afternoon crying for it. Not one of them, I need hardly say, was from anything bigger than a sheepdog.

And for a fortnight the beaches were full of men with shotguns at dusk, walking up and down, frightening each other. It was exactly what Holmes had feared. Somebody fired at a shadow under the pier at Torquay and put a ball through a bathing machine. Somebody else fired at a noise in the dunes at Goodrington and nearly killed a courting couple. If there had been anything on those beaches to find, it would have been trampled to nothing in a week.

That was when Longpei began to earn her keep. But I will come to that.

* * *

I have said that Holmes wanted two kinds of eyes in Torbay. Mine were the first kind, and I have told what they saw. This chapter is about the second kind, which were Edward's, and which turned out to be very much the sharper.

In those days the trams ran from Paignton through Preston and Livermead and along the front past Torre Abbey into Torquay, and on to the harbour and the Strand, and back again. From six in the morning until after eleven at night there was hardly a quarter of an hour when there was not a car somewhere on that road with a driver at the front and a conductor going up and down the steps collecting fares. Every one of those men saw the whole length of Torbay a dozen times a day. Every one of them knew the regulars by sight and most of them by name. And every one of them, as Holmes said, listened, whether he wanted to or not.

Edward did not tell them about Rage. He was very strict about that. He told them only that he was interested. That he had seen the prints at Goodrington himself, and he wanted to know if anybody else saw anything, or heard anything. And that if they did, they should tell him, and nobody else, and he'd stand them a pint for it.

I think it was the pint that did it, at first. Afterwards it was something else. Edward had a way of listening to people that made them want to tell him things. I never had it. I listened like a policeman, and people could tell.

Within a week he had every driver and conductor on the line. Amos Pengelly, the big slow Brixham man who drove the first car, who said very little and saw everything. The two Coysh brothers, conductors, who argued about everything and could be relied on to remember any conversation because they would argue about it afterwards. Young Sam Hannaford, who was fifteen and rode the cars selling newspapers and was in and out of every hotel kitchen on the front.

And through them, he had the passengers.

There was Mrs Ellacott, the laundress, who rode in from Preston on the first car every morning and knew every scandal in every big house she washed for. There was a Brixham fish jowster, a big red woman who came round by road with her baskets twice a week and talked to everyone on the top deck, wanted or not. There was a young schoolmistress from Livermead who had seen something on the lawn of Torre Abbey one evening and was too frightened to tell anybody but the conductor, because he had a kind face. There were a dozen more.

And there was Mr Petherick.

I put him in here because he was there, and because I have promised myself to put down everything as it was and not as it looks to me now. Mr George Petherick was a regular on the 8.40 from Paignton into Torquay, most mornings, for as long as Edward had worked the line. He was a quiet, well-made gentleman of about fifty, in a dark overcoat and a good

hat, with grey side-whiskers and a gold-headed stick. He always rode on top, at the front, unless it was raining, and read the *Western Morning News*. He always had the exact fare. He always said good morning to Edward by name, and asked after Edward's mother, and once, when Edward had a cold, gave him a peppermint lozenge out of a little silver box. Edward liked him very much. Most people did.

On the Wednesday after the inquest, Mr Petherick folded his newspaper as Edward came along the top deck, and said, "A sad business on the sands, Harvey."

Edward agreed that it was.

"Dogs," said Mr Petherick, and shook his head. "Who would have thought it, in a place like this." And he went back to his paper.

That was all. Edward told me about it because I had told him to tell me everything, and he was conscientious. I wrote it down because I wrote everything down. It is in the pocketbook, on the same page as a sighting at Livermead, between a note about the price of coal and a reminder to buy my wife a birthday present. I did not underline it. I have often wished since that I had.

* * *

The reports came to Edward, and Edward brought them to Gran's, and I wrote them down. By Christmas the private pocketbook was half full. I will copy out some of it here, as it

stands, because I think it tells the thing better than I could by going over it again. These are not all the entries. They are the ones that mattered.

Mon. 2 Dec. 5.40 p.m. A. Pengelly (driver), on Torbay Road by Torre Abbey meadows. "Grey shapes" crossing road in front of car, left to right, towards the sea. Three or four. Did not see them clearly, "too quick, too low." Horse in cab rank at Abbey Road reared at same time. Pengelly says he will not swear to anything. Shaken.

Wed. 4 Dec. Mrs Ellacott (laundress). Kitchen maid at a house in Livermead heard howling "from under the cliff" at 1 a.m. Sun., woke whole household. Master told servants it was a ship's siren. No ship in bay that night (checked at harbour office).

Thurs. 5 Dec. Mr G. Petherick, 8.40 car. Asked E.H. if the dog shooting had "done any good." E.H. said not that he knew. Mr P. said "Pity."

Sat. 7 Dec. Schoolmistress (Miss Pinsent), Livermead. Saw "two lamps" low down on lawn at Torre Abbey, 6 p.m., dark. Lamps moved together, went out together. Thinks

they were eyes. Told conductor (W. Coysh) because "nobody else would believe her." W. Coysh believes her. J. Coysh does not. They have argued about it since.

Tues. 10 Dec. Prints. Broadsands, low water, a.m. Seen by Brixham fishermen hauling a boat. Into the sea. Not out. Gone by the time E.H. got there on his day off. Tide.

Wed. 11 Dec. S. Hannaford (newsboy). Kitchen talk at the Imperial, Torquay: "the gentlemen" do not want the word wolf used in front of the visitors. Chef told to tell staff anyone heard saying it will be dismissed. Sam not sure which gentlemen.

I went out on the cars myself, on my days off, in my own clothes, to meet some of these people. Edward introduced me as his cousin from Harberton, which was near enough the truth. I sat on the top deck of the 8.40 three mornings running, in the seat behind Mr Petherick, and watched the back of his good hat, and learned nothing whatever except that he read the shipping news first and the court reports second. On the third morning, as he got down at the Strand, he turned and nodded to me, quite pleasantly, as one regular to another.

I did not go on the 8.40 again for some time after that. I cannot say why.

* * *

Holmes was in and out all that month. He would be at Gran's for two evenings together, and then gone for four days without a word, and then a telegram would come for Edward at the depot, signed RAGE, saying something like *Maister home Thursday, mind the zider*. Edward lived for those telegrams. He kept them all.

Where Holmes went, he mostly did not say. Once he said Exeter, and once London. Once I saw him in Torquay, in Union Street, going into a solicitor's office near the Bay Estates Company's brass plate, dressed as an elderly clergyman with a stoop and a cough, and I walked straight past him as he had taught me to do. He told me afterwards that I had looked at him for a quarter of a second too long, and that a better man than Purvis would have noticed it.

Ania did not go anywhere at all. As far as I could tell, she never left Mrs Luscombe's except to walk. But she walked a great deal, and at all hours, and alone, which was not the done thing for a young woman in those days and caused a good deal of talk in Winner Street. Mrs Luscombe, who could not hear the talk, did not care. She had decided that Ania was a poor foreign girl who needed feeding, and she put a plate in front of her every evening, and every morning it was gone, and Mrs

Luscombe was satisfied. I asked Edward once who ate it. He said he thought the cat.

What Ania did, in those weeks, was the map.

It was pinned to the wall of the little back bedroom at Mrs Luscombe's, a big Ordnance map of Torbay and the country behind it as far as the edge of the moor, and every report that came in through Edward went on it. Ania did not use pins. She marked each one in a very small, very neat hand, in ink: the date, the hour, a single word. *Howl. Prints. Seen. Eyes.* She never made a mistake and never crossed anything out. By the middle of December there were forty marks on that map, from Hope's Nose round to Berry Head.

I stood in front of it one evening with Edward, trying to make something of it, and could not. It was just marks. Ania came and stood beside us. She did not look at the map. She did not need to.

"They go round," she said. "Look." And she drew a slow circle in the air with one finger, round the whole curve of the bay, from the cliffs at Torquay, down through Livermead and Paignton and Goodrington, to Broadsands and Brixham, and out again. "Never inland. Never more than a mile from the water. Always round."

"Like they're looking for summat," said Edward.

Ania turned her head and looked at him for a long moment with those unblinking eyes.

"Yes," she said. "Exactly like that."

* * *

On the night of Saturday the fourteenth of December, two reports came in, from opposite sides of the bay.

The first came from Cockington. The blacksmith's daughter at the forge, going out to the privy at a quarter to ten, heard something in the lane, and saw over the wall four grey backs going down towards the sea, low and quick, like water going over a weir. She knew the time to the minute, because the church clock had just struck the three-quarter and she had counted the strokes to steady herself.

The second came from Brixham. Two men mending nets on the quay heard howling start up from the direction of Berry Head, very close, and saw something, several somethings, moving fast along the top of the breakwater in the lamplight, and then not there. They knew the time too, because the second man had just looked at his watch and said it was a quarter to ten and they should be getting home.

Cockington and Brixham are five miles apart across the water, and further by road.

I brought both reports to Gran's on the Sunday evening, and read them out, and there was a silence. Holmes had come in that afternoon. He sat by the fire with his pipe gone out, frowning at nothing.

"Then there are two packs," he said at last.

"No," said Ania.

She was standing by the back bedroom door, in the shadow, where the firelight did not reach. She said it very quietly, with no doubt in it at all.

"There is only one."

Holmes looked at her. I looked at Holmes. And I saw on his face, for the first and only time that winter, something I had never expected to see there, and did not like.

He was afraid.

> *Sun. 15 Dec. 11 p.m. Home. Cockington, 9.45 p.m. Sat.: four seen. Brixham, 9.45 p.m. Sat.: several seen, howling. 5 miles apart. S.H.: "two packs." Ania: "There is only one." S.H. did not argue with her.*

CHAPTER 8 – Longpei Takes Root

Monday, 2nd December 1895. 9 p.m. Gran's. Ania made the broadside tonight. Took her one hour and forty minutes. I timed it.

I said that Longpei began to earn her keep when the men with shotguns were on the beaches. This is how.

The first thing was the broadside, and I watched Ania make it.

She made it at Mrs Luscombe's kitchen table, by the light of one lamp, on a Monday evening at the beginning of December, while Mrs Luscombe dozed by the range and Edward and I sat and watched. She had a sheet of old paper, thick and soft and a little brown at the edges, that Holmes had brought from somewhere. She had a steel pen, a bottle of ink, a pot of cold tea, a candle, and a stick of charcoal. That was all.

She did not make a draft. She did not rule any lines. She sat down, dipped the pen, and began at the top left-hand corner, and went across and down the sheet as steadily as a sewing machine, and it came out of the end of her pen looking printed.

I do not know how else to put it. Not written to look like printing. Printed. The letters were all the same height and the same weight, with the little feet on them, and the long old-

fashioned *s* that looks like an *f*, and here and there a letter a little out of true, a little blotted, the way the type wore down on the old presses. At the top she drew a picture with the pen and the charcoal: a dragon, with a long body coiled like a rope, and wings, and a head turned back over its shoulder towards something behind it that you could not quite see. It looked like a woodcut. It looked two hundred years old.

Underneath, in big black capitals, it said:

> A TRUE AND WONDERFULL RELATION OF THE DRAGON LONGPEI, WHICH LIETH UNDER DART-MOOR IN THE COUNTY OF DEVON, AND OF THE TAOWU THAT DOTH HUNT HER: AS IT WAS TOLD BY ANTIENT PERSONS OF THE PARISH OF PAINGTON, ANNO DOMINI 1702.

And underneath that, in small close print, the whole story, the way she had told it to us at Bailey's. The Jade Emperor and the four dragons under the mountains. The flight into the west. The wings. The tearing of the land and the coming of the sea. The mouth of the bay opening. The granite of the moor. And at the bottom, a warning, in the language of the old almanacs: that Christian folk should not go abroad in the dimpsy hours near the places where the dragon breathes, *as at the Cavern of Kent, and the Daddy's Hole, and the Hound's Torre*, for fear of meeting the Taowu, who walketh by night in the likeness of hounds.

She had not told us that last part before. I asked her about it.

"People are already afraid of the dogs," she said, without looking up. "It is better to give their fear a shape that keeps them indoors than one that sends them out with guns."

When she had finished the writing, which took her one hour and forty minutes, she made it old. She wiped it with cold tea in some places and not others. She held it over the candle until it browned and spotted. She rubbed a little charcoal into the folds, and folded it, and unfolded it, and folded it again, a dozen times, until it was soft and split a little along the creases, like a thing that has been kept in a drawer for a hundred and fifty years. Then she put it in front of me.

If I had found that in my grandmother's Bible, I would have sworn on my life that it was older than she was.

"Where will it go?" said Edward.

Ania looked at Holmes, who had come in at some point in the last hour without my noticing and was leaning in the doorway with his arms folded.

"Somewhere it will be found," said Holmes, "by somebody respectable, who will be pleased to have found it."

* * *

It went into a box of old pamphlets and ballads at the back of Mr Bovey's second-hand bookshop in Fleet Street, Torquay, a week before Christmas. I do not know how. I did not ask. Four

days later a gentleman who collected such things, and who was a member of the Natural History Society, bought the whole box for seven shillings and sixpence. He found the broadside in it that evening. Within the week he had read a short paper on it to a meeting of the Society, entitled *A Curious Devon Dragon*, and on the twenty-third of December the *Torquay Directory* printed a paragraph about it, with a description of the woodcut and a few lines of the text, under the heading AN OLD TORBAY LEGEND.

That was Ania's doing, and Holmes's. The rest was ours.

Edward told it on the cars. Not all at once. He told the children first, because children are the best carriers of a story in the world. He would come up the steps to the top deck with his ticket rack and his punch, and if there were children up there he would bend down and say, very solemn, *You know what's under the moor, don't 'ee?*, and they never did, and by the time they got off at Torquay they did. He told it to Mrs Ellacott, who told it in every kitchen she washed for. He told it to Amos Pengelly, who told it to nobody, but who started taking his car home by the inland road after dark instead of along the front.

I told it in the bars, the way we had agreed, as if I thought it was nonsense. *Have you heard this rubbish about a Chinee dragon under Dartmoor? My missus' mother believes it.* The surest way to make a man take up a story is to laugh at it in

front of him. Two or three of them laughed with me. The rest went home and told their wives.

By Christmas Eve the children in Winner Street had made a skipping rhyme out of it. Nobody taught it them. I heard it myself, through Mrs Luscombe's window, in the cold, with the rope slapping on the cobbles:

> *Longpei, Longpei, under the moor,*
> *Breathing out the cavern door,*
> *Taowu's coming, hide away,*
> *Don't be out at the end of day.*

On the last line they all ran in.

* * *

It worked. I want to set that down honestly, because a good deal of what happened later was a reckoning for it, and it would be dishonest to pretend that it did not work first.

The men with shotguns went home. Not all at once, but steadily, through the last fortnight of December. It is one thing to walk the sands at dusk with a gun looking for a stray dog and five shillings. It is another thing when your wife has read in the *Directory* that something walks by night in the likeness of hounds, and your children are skipping to it in the street, and the old fellow in the corner of the bar says his grandfather always told him to keep clear of Goodrington after dark and now he knows why. The Local Board quietly

withdrew its five shillings in the new year. The beaches were empty after sunset all that winter, and so were the lanes round Cockington, and so, very nearly, were the caves.

The guide at Kents Cavern told Edward's newsboy, Sam, that he had not had a visitor after three o'clock since Christmas, and that two of the regular lads who held the candles for the parties had given notice. He said one of them claimed to have heard breathing in the far chamber. He said it laughing. Sam said he did not laugh with his eyes.

Nobody went near Daddyhole Plain. Nobody had much reason to, in winter, but now nobody went at all.

And the old people began to remember.

That was the part none of us had quite expected, except perhaps Ania. Within three weeks of the paragraph in the *Directory*, Edward was bringing me stories of old men and women all round the bay who had always known about the dragon under the moor. A Brixham fisherman of eighty told Mrs Ellacott's sister that his grandfather had called the rocks at Berry Head *the Dragon's Teeth*. An old woman in Preston said her mother would never let her pick blackberries on the cliff after sunset because of *the Chinee hound*. None of it was true. None of it had ever been said by anybody before December 1895. But they were not lying, not one of them. They believed it. They had heard the story, and the story had gone into the old places in their heads where they kept their

childhood, and come out again with their mothers' voices on it.

I did not believe that could happen until it happened to my own grandmother.

* * *

But before Christmas I must say something about Ania, because it was in those weeks that I began to watch her, and I want to put down what I saw in the order I saw it.

She learned things. That was all it was, at first. It was what Holmes had said she did, and it did not seem so very strange. But it was the speed of it.

She had never seen a game of chess, Holmes told us, until he set up his little travelling board at Mrs Luscombe's one evening in the second week of December, and showed her the moves. She lost the first game in about twenty minutes. She lost the second in about forty. The third game lasted two hours and ten minutes and ended in a draw, and Holmes sat back from the board with an expression on his face I had not seen there before and did not see again, a sort of rueful delight. They played eleven more games before Christmas. Holmes did not win any of them.

She learned the tram timetable, all of it, every car and every stop, in a single morning, by riding with Edward. That was not so very remarkable either; Edward knew it too. But on the Monday before Christmas she told Edward that the

Company was going to change the winter timetable from the sixth of January, and that the last car from Torquay would run at 10.50 instead of 11.05, and the first car from Paignton would run at 6.10 instead of 6.15. Edward laughed and asked her who had told her. She did not answer. The notice went up in the depot on the Friday. It gave the sixth of January. It gave 10.50 and 6.10.

Nobody at the depot had known. The manager told Edward himself that he had only decided it on the Thursday.

And the third thing, which was the smallest, and which I have thought about the most.

I said that when Ania listened, she did not blink. In the middle of December, I noticed that she had started to. I was sitting across from her at Gran's, and she was listening to Edward tell a long story about the Coysh brothers, and her eyelids came down, and up, quite naturally. And then again. And then again.

I watched for a while without meaning to. And then I took out my watch under the table, and timed it.

She blinked once every four seconds. Exactly every four seconds. Not three and a half, not five. Four. For the whole of Edward's story, which was about eleven minutes long.

I have never told anybody that until now. I did not know what it meant. I am not sure I do now. But I remember feeling, sitting there by Mrs Luscombe's fire with my watch in my hand, that I had seen somebody practising.

* * *

On Christmas Eve we were all four at Gran's, and the children were skipping in Winner Street outside, and we heard the rhyme come in through the window. Holmes got up and went and stood by the glass with his hands behind his back and listened to it, all through, twice.

"Listen to that," said Edward, delighted. "Three weeks. Three weeks, Maister, and they're skipping to it."

Holmes did not turn round.

"We have built a thing, Hills," he said. He said it to me, not to Edward. "And it is no longer ours."

I did not know what he meant. I thought he was being gloomy, as he sometimes was in the evenings. Then he said that he would have to go back to London after Christmas, for some weeks, perhaps longer. There was a matter there that would not wait. He would keep in touch by telegram. Rage would have to manage without him.

Edward looked as if somebody had blown out the lamp.

* * *

On Christmas Day I took my wife and the children out to Harberton on the carrier's cart, to my grandmother's, as we did every year. She was ninety-one and quite blind and as sharp as a bradawl. After dinner, with the children round her chair, she said she would tell them a story her own

grandmother had told her, when she was a little maid, about the thing that lived under the moor.

And she told them about Longpei.

She told it in Harberton speech, by the fire, with her blind eyes turned up to the ceiling. She told them about the great Emperor in the east and the dragons under the mountains, and the one that flew away west with the taowu behind her, and grew wings, and tore the land open to let the sea in. She told them about the mouth of the bay. She told them about the granite. She added things I had never heard: that the dragon's eyes were green as bottle glass, that she sang when the moon was full, that the taowu had once caught the end of her tail at Haytor and that was why the rocks there were split.

I sat at the back of the room with my hands gone cold.

Afterwards, when the children had gone out, I asked her, as gently as I could, who had told her that story.

"My gran," she said. "I told 'ee. When I was a little maid. Where's it to, your head, Jack?"

Later, in the kitchen, my sister told me that she had read the story to Gran out of the *Directory* on the Monday, two days before, because she thought the old lady would like it.

I did not tell my grandmother that. I did not see what good it would do. She died the following spring, believing to the end that her grandmother had told her about Longpei,

and I am not sure, even now, that I had the right to take that from her.

* * *

On Boxing Day I went back on duty. Inspector Robinson was in the front office at the station when I came in, warming his hands at the fire, cheerful, smelling of brandy and somebody's good cigars. He had the *Directory* folded on the desk in front of him.

"Have you seen this, Jack?" he said. "This dragon business?"

I said I had heard something of it.

"Chinese dragon under Dartmoor." He shook his head, smiling. "Utter nonsense, of course. My wife's maid won't go out after four o'clock." He tapped the paper with one finger. "Damned useful, mind you. Keeps the fools off the beaches. Keeps the newspapers off the dogs. Somebody ought to thank whoever thought of it."

He looked at me as he said it. Pleasantly. As he always did.

I said, "Yes, sir," and went to sign the book. My hand was quite steady. I have always been proud of that.

> *Thurs. 26 Dec. 7 a.m. On duty. Insp. R. on the dragon: "Damned useful. Somebody ought to thank whoever thought of it." He looked at me. S.H. to London tomorrow. "We have built*

a thing and it is no longer ours." Gran told the children about Longpei. She says her gran told her.

CHAPTER 9 – On Our Own

Friday, 27th December 1895. 10.15 a.m. Paignton station. S.H. by the up train to Exeter and London. Wet. E.H. on duty, could not come. Ania and self.

Edward could not see him off. The depot would not give him the morning, not two days after Christmas with the visitors' cars running full, and he took it very hard. He sent a message by Sam Hannaford in the code, *Maister mind how 'ee go*, and Holmes read it on the platform and smiled and put it in his pocketbook. It was the only time I ever saw him keep a piece of paper he did not need.

So it was Ania and I who stood with him under the station canopy in the rain, with the train blowing off steam beside us and the porters slamming doors.

He gave me his instructions first, quickly and quietly, like a man going through a list he has gone through many times in his head.

"Three things, Hills. First: you will not go to your own people. Not to the Chief Constable, not to the magistrates, not to anybody, however much you may be tempted to, and however honest they seem. You do not yet know who is honest. Neither do I."

I said I understood.

"Second: you will not let Mr Harvey take risks. He will want to. He will want to sit on the beaches all night with a lantern and a stick, and he will want to follow people, and he will be very brave and very bad at it. You will stop him."

I said I would try.

"Third." He looked past me at Ania, who was standing a little apart with her carpet bag, watching the rain come off the end of the canopy in a long silver fringe. "You will trust her. Even when you do not understand her. Especially then."

I said nothing to that. He saw that I said nothing, and his mouth went a little tight at the corner.

"I know," he said. "I know, Hills. Do it anyway."

Then he went over to Ania. I turned away, out of decency, and looked at the engine. But the station at Paignton is not large, and the rain on the canopy was loud, and they did not think I could hear them. I could hear only a little. I have never been sure that I heard it right.

Holmes said, "If it goes wrong. You know how to reach me."

And Ania said, "Not from here."

There was a pause. Then she said, "Not from now."

Holmes said something I did not catch. Then he said, quite distinctly, "Then don't let it go wrong." And he took her hand, which I had never seen him do, and held it for a moment, and let it go.

The guard blew his whistle. Holmes got into the carriage and let down the window.

"I shall telegraph," he said. "I shall come back if I can, as soon as I can. You must understand there may be times when I cannot. I am not—" He stopped. "I am not always within reach."

The train moved. He did not wave. He sat back from the window and was gone into the steam, and then the train was a red lamp going away up the line towards Torquay, and then it was nothing.

Ania stood beside me on the wet platform with her bag in her hand, looking after it. I want to put down that her face showed nothing at all. Then I want to put down, because it is true, that I had the strongest feeling that it was showing nothing on purpose.

* * *

I do not think I understood, until he was gone, how much we had leaned on him.

It was not that he had done everything. He had not. Edward's network was Edward's, and my pocketbook was mine, and the map on the wall at Gran's was Ania's. But Holmes had been the one who decided what it all meant. We brought him things, and he looked at them, and said *this matters* and *this does not*, and we believed him. Now we

brought things to each other, and looked at them, and none of us knew.

We met at Gran's on the Tuesday after New Year, the three of us, and it was the smallest that room had ever felt. Mrs Luscombe had laid a place for Holmes out of habit. Nobody had the heart to tell her, and she could not have heard us anyway, so the plate sat there all evening at the end of the table, with a slice of ham on it going dry.

We argued. I had not expected that. In all the weeks with Holmes we had never once argued, because there had been no need. Now Edward wanted to watch the beaches. He wanted the three of us, or him and me, to take turns sitting up at night at Goodrington and Paignton sands and Broadsands, at low water, with a dark lantern, to see the dogs for ourselves.

"We've never seen 'em," he said. "Not one of us. Not once. We've got forty marks on a map and a pocketbook full of what other people say. If we just *saw* 'em—"

"And if we did?" I said. "Then what? A man was torn to pieces on Paignton sands six weeks ago, Ted."

"By men," said Edward. "Maister said so. Not by the dogs."

"Maister said he wasn't killed where he was found. He never said what killed him."

We went on like that for some time. I remember I raised my voice, which I hardly ever did, and Edward went red and sulky, and I felt like a sergeant and hated it.

Ania had said nothing all this while. She was sitting at the end of the table beside Holmes's empty place, with her hands folded, listening. In the middle of my argument she lifted her cup of tea and drank from it.

I stopped talking. So did Edward. In all the weeks I had known her I had never once seen her drink anything.

She put the cup down, quite naturally, and looked at us both. Then she said to Edward:

"You will see them, Edward. I promise you that. But not by sitting on a beach. They will not come to a beach where someone is waiting for them." She turned her head to me. "And you are right, Mr Hills. But you are afraid for him, not of the dogs, and he can tell, and it makes him angry."

Neither of us had anything to say to that.

Afterwards, walking home down Winner Street, Edward said to me in a low voice, "Did you see her drink that tea?"

I said I had.

"She pulled a face," said Edward. "After. Just a little one. Like she didn't like it." He was quiet for a few steps. "Like she'd never tasted tea before in her life."

* * *

Thursday, 9th January 1896. Day off. Exeter, by the 8.05. Southernhay. Venning's office.

In the end it was Ania who decided what we should do next, though she did it by asking me a question.

"Mr Venning was a careful man," she said. "You said so. He kept his chain coiled. He carried a pencil and a notebook. A careful man who is afraid of something keeps a copy."

So on my next day off I went to Exeter.

Venning's office was two rooms on the second floor of one of the tall brick houses in Southernhay, with his name still on the door in gilt. There was a clerk there, a thin, nervous young man called Saltern who had worked for Venning six years, and who had been left, as he put it, to wind things up for the widow. He did not want to talk to me. I was not in uniform and had no business there, and I told him so, which surprised him into talking.

He said that Mr Venning had been engaged by the Bay Estates Company in October, through a solicitor in Torquay, to survey the foreshore at Paignton from the pier to Goodrington, with levels, for a new sea wall and promenade and a tramway along the front. It was a good commission, well paid, half in advance, in gold. Mr Venning had been pleased with it at first.

"At first," I said.

Saltern looked at the door, though there was nobody there. Then he went to a drawer in Venning's desk and took out a letter and gave it to me.

It was dated the twenty-fourth of November, two days before Venning died. It had come by the evening post. It was very short. I copied it into my pocketbook there and then, and I have the copy in front of me now.

> *Saltern. I have told the B.E.C. I will not sign the certificate. The levels they want are false and they know it, and the line they want drawn along the foreshore is not theirs to draw. They want the sea front for a tramway that serves nobody but themselves, and they want it measured at night, which I do not understand and do not like. I have kept my own copy of everything, and it is safe. Do not discuss this with anyone. I shall be home Friday. A.V.*

He was not home on Friday. He was on a handcart under a sheet.

"Measured at night," I said. "What does he mean?"

"I don't know, sir. He never said. He did say once he'd been asked to take readings after dark, on the beach, and note down the times of anything unusual. I thought it was tides." Saltern swallowed. "There's something else. The day after he died, before the inquest, a gentleman came here for his papers."

"What gentleman?"

"I don't know, sir. A tall gentleman, very well spoken. He had a letter on police paper, from Torquay, signed by an

inspector. It said all Mr Venning's papers relating to the Bay Estates commission were to be handed over for the inquiry. So I handed them over. Every one." He looked at the letter in my hand. "Except that. That came to me personal. I didn't think it was his business."

I asked him what the inspector's name on the letter was. He did not remember. He had not looked closely. It had looked very proper.

I asked him to describe the tall gentleman again. He did his best. It could have been any of a thousand tall, well-spoken gentlemen. It could have been Inspector Robinson. It could, God help me, have been Holmes in one of his disguises, for all the use it was. I thanked him, and told him to keep the letter somewhere safe and not to mention my visit, and took the train home in the dark with my hands cold on my knees.

There had been no police inquiry into Venning's papers. I knew that for a fact. I was the police inquiry, and nobody had asked me for anything but *dogs*.

* * *

I have kept my own copy of everything, and it is safe.

We went looking for it, of course. Edward and I went round to the boarding house on the Esplanade where Venning had lodged, on the pretext that I was making a few enquiries about his effects. The landlady was willing enough. But his room had been let again over Christmas, to a retired major

from Bath, and when she had cleared it, she said, there had been nothing to clear. Two gentlemen had come round with a cart the day after the inquest and taken everything. Clothes, instruments, papers, the lot. They had said they were acting for the family.

Venning's family were his widow in Exeter, who had received nothing. Saltern had told me that too.

Ania came with us, at the end, and stood in the middle of the major's room for perhaps a minute, quite still, with her head a little on one side, while the major's wife watched her from the doorway with her mouth open. Then she turned round and walked out.

On the stairs, she said: "It is not there. It was never there. He did not trust that house."

"Then where?" said Edward.

"Somewhere he went every day," said Ania. "With someone he did not think anyone would ask."

We did not find it. I want to set down that we did not find it, then or for a long time after, so that nobody reading this thinks we were cleverer than we were. We turned it over at Gran's for two evenings and got nowhere. I had my doubts that it existed at all.

The answer was in front of us all along. It was in Edward's own mouth. I have the entry.

> *Tues. 14 Jan. Gran's. E.H. reports: nothing much. W. Coysh says lost property cupboard*

at depot is "bursting"; says he's got a parcel in his own locker some gentleman left on his car back in the autumn, been meaning to hand it in, "brown paper, string, heavy as a brick." J. Coysh says Will never handed anything in in his life. Argued about it.

That was all. Edward told it as a joke about the brothers. I wrote it down because I wrote everything down. Ania was at the window, looking out at the dark, and did not turn round.

I have asked myself a thousand times since whether she heard it. Whether she knew. I have never found the courage to ask her.

* * *

That Friday, the seventeenth, was the Rage meeting at Gran's. Edward was down for the last car from Torquay that night, the 10.50 under the new timetable, which would have kept him till past midnight. He did not want to miss Gran's. He never did.

So on the Thursday he asked Will Coysh to swap turns with him. Will would take the last car on Friday with old Harry Mudge driving, and Edward would take Will's early car on Sunday, which Will hated, because he liked his bed.

Will said yes at once. He was like that. He said, "You owe me a pint, Ted," and laughed, and went off down the yard whistling, with his ticket rack over his shoulder.

Edward told us about it at Gran's that Friday night, at about half past nine, as a small piece of good news. *Will's took my last car. I owes him a pint.*

He never paid it. Will never came to collect.

> *Fri. 17 Jan. 9.30 p.m. Gran's. E.H., Ania, self. E.H. swapped his last car with W. Coysh, so as to be here tonight. Very cold. No wind. Ania restless; at window most of the evening. Would not say why.*

CHAPTER 10 – The Last Tram

Friday, 17th January 1896. 11.14 p.m. Gran's.
Ania at window: "Now."

I have the time exactly because I looked at my watch the moment she said it. I am a policeman. When somebody says *now* in that voice, you look at your watch.

We had finished our business by ten and stayed on, the way we did, because none of us much wanted to go out into the cold. Edward was telling Mrs Luscombe a long story she could not hear, with gestures, and she was laughing at the gestures. I was writing up the pocketbook. Ania had been at the window most of the evening, as I have said, standing a little back from the glass, so that she could see out and the lamp would not show her. I had asked her twice what she was looking at and she had not answered.

Then, at fourteen minutes past eleven, she turned her head. Not towards the window. Towards the wall at the back of the room, which faced west, and south, towards the sea and the long road to Torquay.

"Now," she said.

Edward stopped in the middle of his story. "What, my bird?"

Ania did not seem to hear him. She stood with her head turned, quite still, the way a dog stands when it hears its master's step in the lane long before anyone else can.

"Four of them," she said. "Moving east." A pause. "Fast."

I got up. I do not know why. There was nothing to get up for. "Where?"

"On the road," said Ania. "Near the sea. Between the Abbey and the headland." She turned at last and looked at me, and for once there was something in her face. I did not know what it was then. I think now it was the nearest she could come, at that time, to fear. "Near the line, Mr Hills."

And then, through the walls of that little house, faint and far off, over the roofs of Paignton, we heard it.

One voice, long and rising. Then two. Then three. Then four.

In the street outside, not one dog barked.

* * *

I do not remember deciding to go. I remember being in Winner Street with my coat half on and Edward running beside me, and Ania behind us, walking very fast but not running, with her skirts held up out of the frost. I remember that the howling stopped while we were still at the top of the hill, and that the silence afterwards was worse.

The tram depot was at the bottom of the town, on the Torquay road, a long brick shed with a yard in front of it and

the rails running in through the big doors on a fan of points. By the time we got there, there were lamps moving in the yard and men's voices, and a horrible sound I did not at first recognise, which was the night watchman being sick against the wall.

I showed my warrant card at the gate, though nobody asked to see it, and went in.

The last car was in the yard. It had not gone into the shed. It had come in through the gate off the main road on its own, the watchman told me afterwards, when he could talk, at about twenty-five to twelve. He had heard it coming along the Torquay road and thought nothing of it, because it was on time near enough. Then he saw that it was not slowing down for the points. It came round the curve into the yard far too fast, lit up like a lantern, swaying, with sparks coming off the trolley pole, and ran the whole length of the fan, and hit the end of the line by the shed doors, and stopped there with a bang that broke two of its lower windows. And then it just stood, he said, humming, with all its lights on, and nobody got down from it.

It was still humming when I got there. Somebody had had the sense to pull the trolley pole off the wire, and the lights had gone out, and men were standing round it with lanterns, not going close.

I took a lantern from one of them and went up to the front platform.

Harry Mudge was standing at the controls.

He was sixty-one years old. He had driven horse buses in Torquay for thirty years before the trams came, and he used to say he still could not get used to steering a thing that had no opinions of its own. He was standing at the front of his car, upright, facing forward through the little front window, with his cap on and his gloved hands on the brass controller and the brake handle, as if he were still driving.

He was dead. He had been dead, Dr Hext said later, for perhaps half an hour.

His throat had been torn out, like Venning's. His coat was ripped open at the chest. But it was not his wounds that I have seen every night since, when I close my eyes. It was his hands. They had been tied to the controls. Somebody had taken his own long woollen muffler, the one his wife had knitted him, and bound his left wrist to the brass handle of the controller and his right wrist to the brake, and tied him upright to the dashboard at the waist with his own belt, so that he stood there and steered his car home dead, with the controller pushed round to full power.

I held the lantern up to his face, and his eyes were open, looking down the road ahead of him, at the shed doors.

Behind me in the yard, Edward said, "Harry," in a voice I had never heard him use, and then he did not say anything else for a long time.

* * *

I went inside the car.

The lower saloon of those old cars was a long narrow box, varnished pine and brass, with wooden seats down both sides facing each other and a strip of coconut matting on the floor. I had ridden in it a hundred times. I stood in the doorway at the back with the lantern held up, and for a moment I did not understand what I was looking at.

The panels were scored. All down both sides, from the roof to the seats, the varnished wood had been gouged in long grooves, four together, side by side, deep enough to lay a pencil in. Some ran straight down. Some ran crossways. Some had been made over and over the same place until the wood hung in splinters. Two of the windows on the left side were starred from the inside. The matting had been torn up and flung into a heap at the front end. And everywhere, on the seats and the panels and the brass hand rails, there was blood.

It looked as though something had been shut in that little box and gone mad to get out.

On the floor, by the back step, lay a conductor's ticket rack with its clips full of tickets, a bell punch on its strap, and a leather cash bag. I picked up the bag. It was heavy. I opened it. It was full of the night's takings, copper and silver. Seventeen shillings and fourpence, when I counted it later. Not one penny gone.

There was no conductor.

I called Will's name. I do not know why. I called it into the dark of the car, and up the curling stair to the top deck, and nobody answered. I went up the stair. The top deck was empty, open to the stars, the wooden seats white with frost. There was nothing there at all except, on the floor at the head of the stairs, one of Will Coysh's brass company buttons, torn off with a little piece of cloth still on it.

* * *

I did what I had done on Paignton sands. I took out the pocketbook and I wrote.

The waybill was the thing. Every conductor on those cars kept a waybill, which was a printed sheet on which he marked every fare he took at every stage, so that the Company could check his takings against his tickets. Edward had written Holmes's words on the back of one. Will's was on the clip of his rack, and Will had been a good conductor, whatever his brother said, and he had marked it up as he went.

The last car had left the Strand at Torquay at ten minutes to eleven. Will had punched five fares at the Strand, two at Torre station, one at the Abbey. They had all been punched off again at Belgrave Road and Torre Abbey, which meant those passengers had got down before the car went out along the sea road. After the Abbey, the car was empty except for Will and Harry.

Then, at the Livermead stage, by Corbyn Head, the last stop before the long dark stretch of road under the cliff, Will had punched one more fare.

One passenger. Inside. First class. Through to Paignton.

There was no other fare after that. Nobody else got on. And nobody, that I could ever find, got off at Paignton.

I looked at that waybill for a long time in the light of the lantern, with Harry Mudge standing dead at the front of the car, and the blood drying on the seats, and something went very cold and very quiet inside me. Because a pack of animals does not wait at a tram stop. And it does not pay its fare.

* * *

Will's locker was at the back of the shed, in a row of tall wooden cupboards where the men kept their coats and their tea cans. Edward knew which one. We went to it together, without saying anything, and found the door hanging open, and the lock split out of the wood.

Inside were Will's Sunday boots, a tin of tobacco, a photograph of a girl from Brixham he was walking out with, and nothing else.

No brown-paper parcel. No string. Nothing heavy as a brick.

Edward stood looking into that locker. Then he said, very quietly, "It was mine."

I said, "What was?"

"The car. The last car. It was my car, Jack. I was down for it. I asked him." His face had gone grey. "I asked him to take it, so I could sit by the fire at Gran's and drink cider. And he said yes, and he said, you owe me a pint, Ted."

I said it was not his fault. I said all the things you say. He did not hear any of them.

"It should've been me," he said. "It should've been me on that car."

I did not say what I was thinking, which was that it would not have mattered, because whoever had got on at Livermead had not been looking for Edward Harvey. They had been looking for a parcel in brown paper, and the conductor who knew where it was. I did not say it because it would not have helped him, and because I was not sure. I wrote it down instead.

* * *

Jim Coysh came at a quarter past twelve, half dressed, with his boots unlaced, because somebody had run to his lodgings. He saw the car and he saw Harry and he understood about his brother before anybody told him. He made a noise I will not describe. It took three men to hold him off the car.

Inspector Robinson came at half past twelve.

He came quickly and he took charge quickly, the way he had at the sands, and I will say for him that he did not try to say *dogs* that night. Even he could not have said it with Harry

Mudge tied to the controls by his own muffler. He stood in the yard in his good overcoat and looked at the car for a long time. His face was very white.

"A madman," he said at last. "A madman, and the dogs. God help us." He turned to me. "How long have you been here, Jack?"

I told him.

"Off duty?"

"Yes, sir. I was close by. I heard the noise."

He looked at me for a moment longer than he needed to. Then he nodded, and began giving orders. Search parties along the road to Livermead with lanterns. Men to the beaches. Every house along the sea front to be knocked up. Dr Hext. The Company. The coroner.

They searched all night. They found Will Coysh's cap at first light, on the rocks below the sea road at Livermead, a little way past Corbyn Head, just above the tide line. They did not find Will.

* * *

Ania had come into the yard with us, and all that while I had lost sight of her. When I found her again, near two in the morning, she was inside the car. Nobody had stopped her. I do not think anybody had seen her go in.

She was standing at the middle of the lower saloon with her right hand flat on the scored panel, her fingers spread,

laying them in the grooves. She moved her hand down slowly, following one set of marks all the way to the seat. Then she took it away and laid it in another set, and followed that. Then another.

I said, "Ania."

She did not turn round. She said, quite calmly, "Four. Always four. Always the same distance apart." Then she took her hand away from the wood and looked at it, at her own spread fingers, for a long moment, in the lantern light. And she said nothing more at all.

* * *

At six o'clock that morning, before I went home, I wrote a telegram on a form at the post office counter in Paignton and handed it to the yawning clerk and paid for it out of my own pocket. It was the first telegram I ever sent in Rage's name, and the shortest.

> *MAISTER. DOGS OUT LAST NIGHT. HARRY DEAD ON THE LAST CAR. WILL GONE. PARCEL GONE. COME. RAGE.*

No answer came that day. Nor the next. Nor the day after that.

> *Sat. 18 Jan. 6.10 a.m. Telegram to S.H., Baker St. H. Mudge dead at controls, tied with own muffler. W. Coysh missing; cap*

found Livermead rocks. Takings untouched. ONE FARE AT LIVERMEAD, 1ST CLASS, INSIDE. Nobody got off at Paignton. Parcel gone from locker. Insp. R. did not say dogs. Ania: "Four. Always four." E.H. says it should have been him.

CHAPTER 11 – Grief and the Inspector

Wednesday, 22nd January 1896. 2 p.m. Funeral of H. Mudge, St John's, Paignton. All cars stopped one minute at 2.30. E.H. did not come.

They buried Harry Mudge on a grey, still afternoon, with a sea fog lying just off the shore so that you could hear the bell buoy but not see it.

The Company did it handsomely, I will say that. Every man who could be spared from the cars was there in his uniform, drivers and conductors and fitters and the men from the generating station, two long rows of them in blue with black bands on their arms, and at half past two, all along the line from Torquay Strand to Paignton, every car on the road stopped where it stood for one minute, with its bell silent. People got down from the cars and stood in the road with their hats off. I am told that even the cab horses on the Strand were quiet.

Harry's widow stood at the graveside in borrowed black, very upright, holding the hand of a grandson. She did not cry. She had cried, I think, for four days, and had none left.

There were a great many wreaths. The Company sent one. The Tramwaymen's Benevolent sent one. The landlord of the Torbay Inn, where Harry had his Saturday pint, sent one.

And there was one more, which I did not notice until afterwards, when the crowd had gone and I went back to look: a big, costly wreath of white lilies, hothouse flowers, the kind you could not buy in Paignton in January, with a card wired to it in a good hand.

With deepest sympathy. G.P.

I asked Mrs Mudge, later, gently, whether she knew who G.P. was. She did not. She said a gentleman had also paid the undertaker's bill, all of it, through a solicitor in Torquay, and asked for his name not to be given. She was very grateful. She said there were still good people in the world.

I did not say anything. I wrote down *G.P.* in the pocketbook, and then I sat looking at it, and I thought of a quiet gentleman on the top deck of the 8.40 with a silver box of peppermints, and I told myself that a regular passenger may very well send flowers to the funeral of a driver he has ridden behind for years. I told myself it was kind. I underlined it anyway. That time, I underlined it.

* * *

Edward did not come to the funeral.

He had not come to Gran's either, since the night of the last car. He had worked his turns, because he could not afford not to, white-faced and silent, and the other men on the cars had let him be. But he had not come to Gran's, and he had not answered the two messages I sent him in the code, and on the

Monday Sam Hannaford told me that he had been seen in the Torbay Inn on Sunday afternoon, alone, drinking hard, which Edward never did.

And on the Tuesday, Jim Coysh had gone for him.

It happened in the depot yard, at the change of turns, in front of thirty men. Jim walked up to Edward as he was signing off and hit him in the face, without a word, and knocked him down on the cobbles. Then he stood over him, and said it, loud enough for the whole yard to hear.

"You sent him. You sent our Will out on that car so you could go and sit in a cottage with a policeman and a foreign woman. Don't think I don't know where you go, Harvey. Everybody knows. What are you, the three of you? What are you *doing*?"

Edward did not get up. He did not hit back. He lay on the cobbles with his lip bleeding and looked up at Jim and said nothing at all, and after a while the other men pulled Jim off and took him away.

I heard about it that evening. I went round to Edward's lodgings in Church Street, and his landlady said he was in, but he would not open the door to me. I stood on the stairs and talked to the door for a quarter of an hour. I told him that it was not his fault. I told him that Jim was half out of his mind with grief and would be sorry for it. I told him that whoever had got on that car at Livermead had been looking for a parcel and not a conductor, and that if Edward had been on the car

instead of Will, then Edward would have been in Will's place, and nothing else would have been different.

The door did not open. After a while I heard him say, very low, through it: "Then why weren't it me, Jack?"

I had no answer to that. I went home.

* * *

It was Ania who brought him back.

I did not see it. I had it from Edward, much later, and from his landlady, who was scandalised by it for the rest of her life, and from Ania, who would only say that she had sat with him.

She went round to Church Street on the Wednesday evening, the night of the funeral, at about nine o'clock. The landlady told her that Mr Harvey was not receiving visitors, and certainly not young women, and certainly not at that hour. Ania thanked her politely, and walked past her, and up the stairs, and knocked once on Edward's door. And Edward, who had not opened it to me, opened it to her.

She stayed until half past six in the morning.

The landlady sat up all night on a hard chair at the bottom of the stairs, in her shawl, listening, ready to call the police. She told half of Paignton afterwards that she had heard nothing. Not one sound, the whole night. No talking. No crying. Nothing.

What Edward told me, years later, was this. Ania had come in, and shut the door, and sat down on the hard chair by his bed, and taken his hand. She had not said anything. She had not tried to comfort him. She had simply sat there, holding his hand, all night, without moving, while he lay on the bed in his clothes and stared at the ceiling and, towards morning, wept.

"I've never sat so still in my life as she sat," he said. "Not for ten minutes. She sat like that nine hours, Jack. I don't believe she moved once. I'd wake up and look, and she'd be just the same, looking at me. Not tired. Not anything. Just there."

I asked him whether she had said anything at all.

"Once," he said. "Near the end. When it was getting light. I said to her, I said, what's the use of any of it, Ania, what's the use of us, when we can't even keep one tram conductor safe. And she said—" He stopped and thought about it, trying to get it right. "She said, *I do not know how to do this yet, Edward. I am learning. Please let me stay while I learn.*"

He never knew what she meant. I am not sure he wanted to.

But on the Thursday evening, he came to Gran's.

He came in quietly, with his lip still swollen, and sat down in his old place by the fire, and Mrs Luscombe put a mug of cider in his hand without asking, and nobody said

anything about anything. Ania was across the hearth from him, with her tea.

And I saw Edward look at her, and look again, and then something happened in his face that I had not seen there for a week. He very nearly smiled.

I followed his look. Ania was holding her cup the way Edward held his. Not by the handle, the way a lady holds a cup, but cradled in both hands, with the fingers laced round it and the thumbs hooked over the rim, the way a tramwayman holds his tea on a cold platform at six in the morning. Exactly that way. To the angle of the thumbs.

She did not look up. She drank, and pulled her little face, and drank again.

* * *

> *Friday, 24th January 1896. Inquest on H. Mudge. Verdict: wilful murder by some person or persons unknown. The waybill was not produced.*

They could not say *dogs* this time. Not with Harry tied to his controls. The coroner said so himself, in so many words, and looked very unhappy about it, and the jury did not even go out. Wilful murder, by some person or persons unknown. The *Directory* printed it the next morning under a black headline, THE TRAMCAR HORROR, and for the first time the word

murderer was in print in Torbay, and the whole bay read it over its breakfast.

I had handed the waybill in myself, on the Saturday morning, with my report. I had put it into Inspector Robinson's own hand, in his office, folded inside a sheet of foolscap, with a note in my best writing explaining what it showed. The fares at the Strand and Torre, all punched off again before the sea road. The single first-class fare at Livermead. Nobody alighting at Paignton. I had said, as plainly as a constable can say anything to an inspector, that it seemed to me that whoever killed Harry Mudge had got on that car at Corbyn Head and paid his fare.

At the inquest, Inspector Robinson gave the police evidence. He described the car, and the wounds, and the binding of the hands. He described the search. He described the finding of the conductor's cap. He did not mention the waybill.

Afterwards, at the station, I looked for it. It was not on the file. Nor was my report. The file on Harry Mudge, when I opened it, contained Dr Hext's statement, the watchman's, a plan of the depot yard, and a note in Robinson's hand that the conductor's ticket rack and cash bag had been returned to the Company.

I stood at the cabinet with the file in my hands for a long time. Then I put it back, and went and knocked on Robinson's door.

* * *

He was at his desk, writing. He looked up and smiled when he saw me, and told me to shut the door and sit down, and offered me a cigarette. I shut the door. I did not sit down, and I did not take the cigarette. I had never refused one of his cigarettes before. He noticed it. I saw him notice it.

I told him the waybill was not on the file.

"Isn't it?" he said. "Damned clerks. I'll have it looked for."

I said my report was not on the file either.

"Then that will turn up with it, I expect." He put his pen down. "Sit down, Jack."

I said I would rather stand, sir.

He looked at me for a while. He had a way of looking at a man, Robinson did, warm and easy, as though he were very fond of you and slightly amused by you at the same time, and wanted you to know he was on your side. I had always liked that look. That afternoon, for the first time, I noticed that it never quite reached his eyes.

"What waybill, Jack?" he said.

I did not answer at once. I want to be honest: I had not expected that. I had expected excuses. I had not expected him simply to look at me across his desk and take the thing out of the world.

"The conductor's waybill, sir. From the last car. I gave it into your hand on Saturday morning. It shows one fare taken at Livermead."

"I don't remember any waybill." He said it quite gently. "You'd had a very bad night, Jack. You'd been up since—when? The night before? You'd seen a terrible thing. A man can mistake what he's done, after a night like that. What he's handed in and what he's only meant to."

"I haven't mistaken it, sir."

"No?" He leaned back in his chair. "Then I wonder where it's got to. Do you know, I wonder about a good many things, these days. I wonder, for instance, what a constable was doing at the tram depot at half past eleven at night when he was off duty and had no call to be there. I wonder what he was doing down on the sands at Paignton, before the sergeant or the doctor, writing in his little book. I wonder why his name keeps coming up in the same breath as a tram conductor called Harvey, who has been asking a great many questions on his cars, and a foreign young woman nobody knows anything about, who walks about alone at night." He smiled. "I wonder who sends telegrams to London, from the post office in Paignton, at six o'clock in the morning."

I felt the floor go out from under me. I kept my face still. I do not know how.

"You're a good officer, Jack," said Robinson. "One of the best I've got. Steady. Honest. Good men get on in this Force, if they're sensible. They get their stripes and their pensions and they see their children grow up. You've got two little ones, haven't you? And another on the way, I hear.

Congratulations." He picked up his pen again. "I'm taking you off nights. You'll do the station desk, days, for the next month or two. It'll be a rest for you. You look as if you need one. And Jack."

I waited.

"I'd keep away from the trams, if I were you. For a while. They're not safe, these days. Everybody says so." He bent his head to his writing. "That's all."

I went out and shut the door behind me and stood in the passage. My hands were shaking. I put them in my pockets so that the sergeant at the desk should not see.

What Robinson did not know, and what I have thanked God for many times since, was that before I gave him that waybill on the Saturday morning, I had sat for half an hour on an upturned crate in the corner of the depot shed, by lantern light, before dawn, and copied every line of it into the private pocketbook. Every stage. Every fare. Every punch mark. I had done it because Holmes had said my drawing on the sands was the most useful thing anybody did that winter, and because I wrote everything down.

The waybill was gone. The copy was in my coat.

* * *

That night, at Gran's, I told the others. I told them all of it, the file and the cigarette and *what waybill* and the telegrams to London, and the station desk, and *keep away from the trams*.

Edward went white and then red, and swore, which he seldom did in front of Ania. Ania listened without blinking, which I noticed, because she had been blinking every four seconds for a month.

"He knows about the telegram," I said. "He knows I've been sending to London. That means he's got somebody in the post office. Or he's had me followed."

"Both, very likely," said Ania.

"Then Maister's in danger too. If they know where the telegrams go—"

"They know the address," said Ania. "That is all they know." She said it with perfect certainty, and I did not ask her how she knew that either.

And then, as though somebody had been waiting outside the door for the right moment, there was a knock, and Mrs Luscombe, who could not hear knocking, did not move, and Edward went to the door, and it was Sam Hannaford in the dark with a telegram in his hand that had come to the depot for Mr Harvey at half past eight.

It was the first word from Holmes in a week. Edward tore it open by the fire and read it out.

> *RAGE. RECEIVED. CANNOT COME. NOT YET. FORGIVE ME. TRUST ANIA. KEEP THE WAYBILL. SAY NOTHING TO THE SQUIRES MAN. MAISTER.*

Edward said, "Thank God," and laughed, and passed it round.

I read it twice. Then I took out my pocketbook and turned back to the copy I had made of my own telegram, the one I had sent from Paignton post office at ten past six on the Saturday morning. I read that twice, too.

MAISTER. DOGS OUT LAST NIGHT. HARRY DEAD ON THE LAST CAR. WILL GONE. PARCEL GONE. COME. RAGE.

I had not mentioned the waybill. I had not mentioned it to anybody, outside that room, except Robinson.

I looked across the fire at Ania. She was holding her cup in both hands, the way Edward held his, with her thumbs hooked over the rim. She met my eyes, and held them, and blinked, once, very slowly.

She did not say anything. Neither did I.

> *Fri. 24 Jan. 11.40 p.m. Home. Insp. R.: "What waybill?" He knows of the telegrams. Knows of E.H. and Ania. Knows Mary is expecting. I am on the desk. Copy of waybill safe (this book, p. 61). Telegram from S.H. tonight says KEEP THE WAYBILL. I never told him of the waybill. Nobody told him. Ania looked at me.*

CHAPTER 12 – The Locked Villa

Saturday, 1st February 1896. 7.52 a.m. Station desk. Telegraph from Torquay: "Insp. Robinson to attend at once at Hesketh Lodge, Warberries. Sudden death. Councillor Brimacombe." Insp. R. left 8.05 by cab.

The desk, as Robinson had meant it to, kept me out of things. But a desk is also where every message comes in, and every message goes out, and a man who sits at it all day and keeps his mouth shut and his eyes open learns a great deal. I had not understood that when he put me there. I do not think Robinson had either.

The Torquay message came at eight minutes to eight. I wrote it in the book, as I wrote everything, and sent the boy up the road for the Inspector. Robinson came down the stairs pulling on his coat, read the slip over my shoulder, and went quite still for a moment. Then he said, "Damn," very softly, to nobody, and went out to the cab without looking at me.

I noticed that he did not ask who Councillor Brimacombe was. Everybody in Torbay knew who Councillor Brimacombe was. But I noticed that he did not ask what had happened to him, either.

* * *

I did not see Hesketh Lodge that day, or for some time after. Everything I know of what was found there I had from three people: from Mrs Ellacott, who did the Brimacombes' washing and was in the house within the hour; from the cook, who was Mrs Ellacott's cousin, which in Torbay is how most things are known; and from Ania, who went into that house two days later, by a way I will come to. I set it down as they told it, as carefully as I can.

Matthew Brimacombe was sixty-four years old, a retired draper who had done very well, a widower once and married again, and for the last eleven years a member of the Torquay Town Council. He was a stout, loud, stubborn man, a chapel man, who believed that every penny of the ratepayers' money was his own personal business, and he had quarrelled with half the Council at one time or another, and been proved right more often than they liked.

That winter he had quarrelled with them about the trams.

The Bay Estates Company had applied to the Council for leave to lay a new line along the sea front, from the harbour round under the cliffs to Livermead, where it would join the Paignton road. It would go across the foreshore. It would need a new sea wall, and a promenade, and a good deal of land that was presently public. The Company had friends on the Council. A great many friends, it turned out, for a company nobody had heard of a year before. The application was to be

voted on at the meeting on Monday the third of February, and everybody expected it to go through.

Everybody except Councillor Brimacombe. He had spoken against it twice already. He had said, at the January meeting, in front of the press, that he would not vote one inch of public land to a company that would not put its owners' names on its own notepaper. And he had said, the cook told Mrs Ellacott, at his own dinner table on the Thursday, that on Monday he would put the owners' names on it himself. He had found out. He had it in writing. He would read it out in the Council chamber and let the town see who it was selling its sea front to.

That was on the Thursday. On the Friday night he went into his study after dinner, at about half past nine, as he always did, to work on his papers. Mrs Brimacombe was away in Bath with her sister. He told the butler, Lang, that he would not need anything further and that he did not want to be disturbed. Lang heard him shoot the bolt on the study door behind him. He always did that too. He was a man who liked to know where everybody was.

At about a quarter past one in the morning, the whole household woke at once.

They all described it the same way, Mrs Ellacott said, the cook and the two maids and Lang. A howling. Not outside, in the garden, where you might expect it. Inside. In the house. *Coming up through the walls*, the younger maid said, *like it*

was in the chimneys. Long and rising, and a second voice under the first, and a third. It went on for perhaps a minute, and then it stopped.

Nobody went down. I do not blame them. The two maids got into one bed and put their heads under the bedclothes. The cook said her prayers. Lang got as far as the top of the stairs with a candle and a poker and stood there, he told the coroner, for some considerable time, listening, and heard nothing further, and went back to bed. He said he thought it must have come from outside after all, from the garden or the lane, and been carried in by some trick of the house. He was a sensible man. He did not believe in dragons.

The family had a dog, an old liver-and-white spaniel called Gyp, who slept in a basket in the kitchen passage. In the morning they found him shut in the scullery, with the door latched on the outside, though nobody had shut him there. He was not hurt. He was lying flat under the sink with his nose between his paws, shaking, and he would not come out, and he had not made, the cook said, so much as a whimper all night. She had never known Gyp not to bark at a cat.

At seven o'clock Lang knocked at the study door with the master's hot water and got no answer. He knocked again. He tried the handle. The door was bolted on the inside. He called. He went round by the garden to the study windows, which looked out over the lawn towards the sea, and found the

shutters closed and fastened from within, as he had closed and fastened them himself at dusk. Then he came back with the gardener and the gardener's boy, and between them they broke the door in.

Matthew Brimacombe was in his chair at his desk, with his back to the door and his face to the shuttered window. His head had fallen forward on the desk. His throat had been torn out.

The desk was gouged, Mrs Ellacott said, in long marks, four together. The fire was out. The lamp had burned dry. And on the Turkey carpet, all round the chair and in a trail across the floor to the fireplace, there were tufts of coarse grey hair, a great deal of it, the kind of hair that comes off a big animal in handfuls when it is moulting, or fighting, or being torn.

The door was bolted. The shutters were barred. The chimney, the sweep said afterwards, was a nine-inch flue that a cat could not have got up.

And there was nobody in the room but the Councillor.

* * *

Inspector Robinson was at Hesketh Lodge by half past eight. The Torquay superintendent had asked for him particularly, I learned afterwards, because of his experience with the sands and the tram. He took charge. He had the body removed by ten. He had the household questioned, one by one, in the

dining room. He had the study locked, and the key in his own pocket.

And at some point that morning, between the breaking of the door at seven and the locking of the study at ten, every paper on Councillor Brimacombe's desk went missing.

The cook was sure of it. She had looked in at the broken door, as everyone had, before Lang shooed them away, and the master's desk, she said, had been covered in papers, the way it always was, a great untidy heap of them. When she took Mrs Ellacott in to see the room on the Saturday afternoon, because Mrs Ellacott was to take away the rugs and the curtains for cleaning, the desk was bare. Swept clean. Nothing on it but the inkstand, the pen tray, and the blotter.

The police had taken the papers, Lang supposed. Inspector Robinson had said nothing about it.

The Councillor's speech for Monday's meeting was not found. Nor was whatever he had had in writing. Nor, his clerk at the Council told the *Directory*, was there any copy of either at the Council offices. Matthew Brimacombe had been a man who liked to know where everybody was, and he had kept his secrets where he could see them, on his own desk, behind his own bolted door.

* * *

The town, that weekend, was very frightened.

Three men dead now, in ten weeks. The first by dogs, the coroner had said. The second by a madman. And now the third, behind a bolted door, in a respectable villa in the Warberries, with wolf's hair on the carpet and the whole household woken by howling in the walls. The *Directory* came out on the Monday with a black border. There were letters in it demanding to know what the police were doing. One of them, signed *A Ratepayer*, asked whether the Council would now do what it should have done a month ago and offer a reward for the creature, whatever it was, dead or alive.

And in the kitchens, and on the trams, and in the bars, the word I had laughed at in front of my friends in December came back to me with nobody laughing at all.

Sam Hannaford brought it. He said the maids at the Imperial were saying that the taowu had come down the chimney. That the dragon had been seen, or the thing that hunts her, and it had found a way into a house at last. That nobody was safe now, not even behind a bolted door. Mrs Ellacott said the same, from three different kitchens. Amos Pengelly said that two of his regulars had stopped riding the car altogether, and that a man on the top deck had told him, quite seriously, that the taowu went about in the shape of a pack of hounds and could pass through walls.

It was our story. Ania's story, with the line about *the likeness of hounds* that she had added at Mrs Luscombe's

kitchen table. And it had gone into the town and come out again as something none of us had meant.

I said as much at Gran's on the Sunday night. Edward looked at the fire. Ania said nothing at all.

* * *

Ania went into Hesketh Lodge on the Monday morning, the third of February, at nine o'clock.

She went in as Mrs Ellacott's girl, with a laundry basket on her hip and a shawl over her head and her sleeves rolled up, to help carry out the study curtains and the Turkey carpet, which the household wanted taken away and burned. It was Mrs Ellacott's idea, and she was proud of it all her life. Lang let them in at the back door and took them through to the study himself, and unlocked it with a key he had been given by the police for the purpose, and stood in the doorway watching them, because he did not care to go in.

They were in that room for twenty-five minutes. Mrs Ellacott took down the curtains. Ania, she told me, rolled up the carpet, very slowly, very carefully, on her knees, and while she rolled it she looked at everything.

This is what Ania told us at Gran's that night. I copied it into the pocketbook as she said it, and she did not hurry, so that I could keep up.

The bolt on the door is new and very stiff. Shooting it takes some strength. It was not forced. It was shot from the inside, or something that is not a hand shot it.

The left-hand shutter has a bar that drops into an iron cradle. There are fresh bright scratches inside the cradle, on the side away from the room. In the hinge of that shutter, caught very small, there is a single hair. Black. Long. Horse.

On the wall beside the fireplace is a speaking tube, to the kitchen. The mouthpiece has a whistle in it, on a little chain, to call the servants. The whistle was not in the mouthpiece. It was under the desk.

The blotter. A piece has been cut out of the middle of it. A neat square. With a very sharp knife. The edges are clean. She looked at me as she said that. I knew what she was thinking. I was thinking it too. A coat lining on Paignton sands, cut, not torn. A clean edge.

The ashes in the grate are paper, not coal. A great deal of paper.

And then the last thing. She had brought it with her, a little twist of grey hair, folded in a scrap of brown paper. She put it on Mrs Luscombe's table under the lamp.

"Smell it," she said.

Edward bent down and smelt it, and made a face. I did the same. It smelt of dust, and something sharp and clean and medicinal behind the dust, that I knew and could not put a name to.

"Camphor," said Ania. "And arsenic soap. They use them to keep the moth out of furs. And out of the skins of animals that have been stuffed." She touched the hair with one fingertip. "This came from no living thing, Mr Hills. This animal has been dead for a very long time."

There was a silence in Mrs Luscombe's kitchen.

"Then the howling," said Edward slowly. "The howling in the walls—"

"I did not say there was no howling," said Ania. She looked at the speaking tube whistle that she had drawn for me in my pocketbook, on its little chain. "I said this hair is dead."

She would say no more than that. I pressed her. She looked at me with her clear, steady, four-second eyes and said, "I do not know yet what it means. I know what I saw. When Maister comes, he will know what it means."

"And if he doesn't come?"

She did not answer that.

* * *

The Torquay Town Council met that evening, Monday, the third of February, at seven o'clock, as it had been going to meet. The chairman spoke for some time, very movingly, about the late Councillor Brimacombe, his long service, and his independence of mind. The members stood for a minute in silence.

Then they took the business of the evening.

Item four on the agenda was the application of the Bay Estates Company for leave to construct a tramway along the sea front, from the harbour to Livermead, with associated works upon the foreshore. It was moved and seconded.

The motion was carried without a voice against it.

> *Mon. 3 Feb. 11.55 p.m. Home. Hesketh Lodge (Ania, as laundry girl). Bolt not forced. Fresh scratches in shutter cradle. ONE BLACK HORSEHAIR in shutter hinge. Whistle out of speaking tube, under desk. Square cut out of blotter, clean edge (cf. Venning's lining). Paper ash in grate. Grey hair smells of camphor and arsenic soap: from a skin, long dead (Ania). Papers gone from desk before Insp. R. locked study. B.E.C. tramway passed tonight. No one spoke against.*

CHAPTER 13 – The Money Trail

Tuesday, 4th February 1896. Gran's. Camphor. Who in Torbay keeps dead animals in camphor? Taxidermists. Museum. Collectors. Furriers. E.H. to ask on the cars.

It was Edward who found Absalom Ward, and I want to say at the start that we were wrong about him. We were wrong about him very thoroughly, all three of us, for nearly a week. I set it down because I promised myself to set down our mistakes as well as the rest, and because being wrong about Ward taught me more about what we were up against than anything we got right that winter.

There were two taxidermists in Torbay that year. One was an old man in Paignton who did mostly fish and the occasional pet canary. The other was Ward, who had a narrow, dark shop in Torwood Street, Torquay, with a bow window full of glass cases: owls, a fox with a pheasant in its jaws, a stoat in its winter white, an otter on a painted rock. And in the middle of the window, on a plinth all to itself, a full-grown grey wolf, standing four-square with its lips drawn back off its teeth and its glass eyes glaring out at Torwood Street.

Everybody in Torquay knew that wolf. Children dared each other to touch the glass in front of it.

Edward heard about Ward from three people in two days. Sam Hannaford said that the boy who swept out Ward's shop had been told in the autumn not to come in on Thursdays any more, and had been paid for the Thursdays anyway. Mrs Ellacott said that Ward had been seen by her cousin, Brimacombe's cook, at the back gate of Hesketh Lodge in December, talking to the gardener. And Amos Pengelly said, slowly, after a pint had been put in front of him, that he remembered Ward on his car. On the seventeenth of January. The night of the last tram. Pengelly had been driving the car before the last one, and Ward had got on at the Strand, and got down at Livermead.

At Livermead. By Corbyn Head. Half an hour before Will Coysh punched a first-class fare there.

We sat at Gran's that Tuesday night and looked at each other. It all fitted. Camphor and arsenic soap. A grey wolf in the window. A man who knew how to skin a thing and keep the hair on it. Who could make a foot of plaster and wire, or wood, or iron, that would leave a wolf's print in wet sand. Who had been at Brimacombe's gate, and at Livermead on the night of the tram.

"It's him," said Edward. He was white with it. "Jack. It's him. He killed Will."

Ania did not say anything. I looked at her, waiting for her to say something, and she did not, and I took her silence for agreement. I should not have. I have learned since that when

Ania said nothing, it was generally because she had not decided yet, and was waiting to see whether we would.

* * *

We were too slow.

On the Saturday, the eighth, I was at the desk when Inspector Robinson came down the stairs in his coat, with a sergeant and two constables behind him, and said cheerfully as he passed, "Don't wait up, Jack. We're going to make an arrest."

They arrested Absalom Ward in his shop at half past eleven in the morning, in front of a crowd that had gathered in Torwood Street to watch. They took him out in handcuffs. They took the grey wolf out of the window, plinth and all, and put it on a cart, and drove it up to the police station in Market Street through the middle of Torquay with its teeth bared, and half the town ran alongside. They took a sack of grey hair from his back room, and a crate of camphor, and a set of iron tools for stretching skins. And they took, from a cupboard under his stairs, a thing that Robinson held up afterwards for the newspaper men to see: a carved block of oak, the size of a man's fist, shaped on its underside into the pad and four toes and claws of a great wolf's forefoot.

The *Directory* came out on the Monday with a headline across three columns: THE TORBAY HORROR. ARREST OF A TORQUAY TRADESMAN. THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

The town breathed out. You could feel it. On the cars, Edward said, people were laughing again for the first time in a month. Women let their children out to play after four o'clock. Somebody chalked *WARD THE WOLF* on the wall of his shop and somebody else threw a stone through the bow window, and the owls and the stoat and the otter on its painted rock lay among the broken glass all day until the constable on the beat swept them up.

And Inspector Robinson, the *Directory* said, was to be commended by the Watch Committee.

* * *

I went to Gran's that Monday night feeling sick. Edward was there before me, and I thought he would be glad. He was not glad. He was sitting by the fire with his head in his hands.

"It's too easy," he said, before I had my coat off. "Isn't it, Jack. It's too easy."

And I knew that it was. I had known it from the moment Robinson came down the stairs and told me not to wait up. Robinson, who had made my four reports disappear, and Venning's papers, and the waybill, and Brimacombe's speech. Robinson did not arrest the men who did those things. Robinson tidied up after them.

Ania had been at the window. Now she came and sat down at the table, between us, and folded her hands, and

looked at us both. And she said, at last, what she had not said on the Tuesday.

"He did not do it."

"Then why didn't you say so?" said Edward. "Last week, when we were sitting here saying it was him—"

"Because I did not know last week. I only thought it. I wanted to see what you would think." She paused. "I am sorry. That was wrong of me. I am learning when it is wrong."

"And now you know?"

"Now I know," said Ania. "The paw."

She had seen it in the *Directory*. They had printed an engraving of it, from a photograph, with the measurements: four inches and three-quarters across the pad. She took my pocketbook from me, very politely, and opened it at the drawing I had made on Paignton sands in November, and put her finger on the measurements I had written beside the prints.

"Your prints were five inches and a half across. All of them. This is four and three-quarters." She closed the book. "It is a very good paw. Somebody made it very carefully, so that a policeman would find it under Mr Ward's stairs. But it did not make the prints you drew. It is the wrong size."

* * *

I could not go to Ward. He was in the cells at Market Street, in Torquay, in Robinson's charge, and a Paignton desk constable

asking to see him would have been the end of me. But on the Wednesday afternoon, by one of those chances that are not chances, Ward came to me.

Or rather his sister did. Her name was Hephzibah Ward, a gaunt, upright spinster of fifty who kept house for him over the shop, and she came into the Paignton station at three o'clock in her best black because, she said, the Torquay police would not listen to her, and somebody had told her there was a constable at Paignton who would.

I asked her who had told her that. She said it was a young foreign lady who had stopped her in Torwood Street that morning, among the broken glass, and asked her very kindly if she needed help.

I took Miss Ward into the back room, where Robinson could not walk in on us without my hearing his step, and I listened.

On the night of the seventeenth of January, she said, her brother had got off the tram at Livermead because their mother was in the almshouse there, very ill, and he went to sit with her three nights a week. He had been there from a quarter to eleven until long after midnight. The matron would swear to it. Nobody had asked the matron.

On the night Councillor Brimacombe died, her brother had been at the Lodge. It was the annual dinner. Forty men had sat down to it at the Royal Hotel, and her brother had been at the top table, because he was Senior Warden that

year, and they had not risen till after two. Forty men would swear to it. Nobody had asked any of them.

And at the gate of Hesketh Lodge, in December, he had been delivering a pike. A great pike in a bow-fronted glass case, that the Councillor had caught in the Slapton Ley in his youth and wanted mounted for his study. It was hanging over the study fireplace to this day.

I wrote it all down. Then I asked her about the Thursdays.

She looked at me sharply. Then she lowered her voice, though there was nobody to hear.

"That was the gentleman's commission," she said. "In October. A gentleman's private collection, my brother was told. Two old wolf skins. Very old, and very bad, falling to pieces, the moth in them. They came in a crate. He was to clean them and dress them and make them supple again, as supple as a new skin, so that they could be handled. Not mounted. Just made supple. He worked on them Thursdays, private, with the shop shut. He was paid in gold. Very well paid. Too well, I told him."

"Who was the gentleman?"

"He never knew. It all went through a solicitor. Mr Endacott, in Union Street."

I wrote the name down, and underlined it. Union Street. A brass plate on a door.

"And the skins?"

"A carrier came for them the week before Christmas," said Miss Ward. "And took them away. My brother never saw where." She twisted her black gloves in her lap. "And then that Inspector came, with his men, and found that wicked paw thing under our stairs. And I swear to you, Constable, on my mother's life, I had swept under those stairs on the Friday and there was nothing there."

I believed her.

I gave her the name of a solicitor in Newton Abbot whom I knew to be honest, and who had nothing whatever to do with Union Street. I told her to go to the almshouse matron, and the Master of the Lodge, and to get their statements on paper, signed, before anybody else got to them. And I told her she had never spoken to me.

The magistrates heard the charge against Absalom Ward on Friday the fourteenth of February. The matron gave evidence. Eleven gentlemen of the Lodge gave evidence, in their best broadcloth, one after another, with increasing indignation. The magistrates conferred for four minutes and dismissed the charge for want of evidence, and the chairman of the bench remarked, in a voice that carried to the back of the court, that he trusted the police would in future make their enquiries before their arrests and not after.

Inspector Robinson took it very well. He said to the newspaper men on the steps that he had acted on the evidence, as was his duty, and that the evidence had not been

sufficient, which was the law's business and not his, and that the enquiry would continue. He smiled for them. He was very good at smiling.

The town stopped breathing out.

* * *

That night at Gran's, Ania took down the map.

She had never taken it down before. It had hung on the wall of the little back bedroom for three months, and grown its marks one by one, in black ink, sixty-one of them now, round the curve of the bay. She took it down and laid it out on Mrs Luscombe's kitchen table, and weighted the corners with the cider mugs, and then she took from her carpet bag a sheet of tracing linen, the kind that architects use, and laid that over it.

On the tracing linen, in fine red ink, was a line.

"The tramway," she said. "The Bay Estates Company's line. As it was passed by the Council on the third of February. I copied it from the plans that the Company deposited at the Council offices. They are public. Anyone may look at them. Nobody does."

The red line ran from the harbour at Torquay, round under the cliffs at Livermead, along the foreshore through Preston and Paignton, and on down the sea front past Goodrington, towards Broadsands and the road to Brixham.

And under it, all the way along, like beads under a thread, lay the black marks.

Not near it. Under it. The prints at Goodrington, the prints on Paignton sands, the howling under the cliff at Livermead, the shapes on the road by the Abbey, the eyes on the lawn, the tracks at Broadsands. Almost every one of them lay within a stone's throw of that red line. Not one of them lay more than half a mile from it.

In December Ania had told us that they went round the bay, never inland, like they were looking for something. Edward remembered it now, and said it very slowly. "They weren't looking for summat. They were walking the line."

"Someone was walking them along it," said Ania.

Then she took out a second sheet. A list, in her small, neat hand. Every piece of land along that red line that had changed hands since the summer. She had it from Mrs Ellacott and Sam and the property columns of the *Directory* and the auction notices pasted up outside the Corn Exchange. A market garden at Livermead. Four cottages at Preston. A field above Goodrington. A strip of cliff at Roundham. A row of fishermen's sheds at Broadsands. Fourteen properties.

She marked each one on the tracing linen, in red, with the date of its sale.

And beside every red date, a week before it, or two, or three, there was a black one.

A sighting. A howl. A set of tracks going into the sea. And then, a fortnight later, an old couple who had lived in a cottage at Preston for forty years would decide that they could not bear to stay there another winter with those things going by in the dark, and would sell for whatever they could get, to whoever would buy it. And whoever would buy it was always the same.

"Mr Endacott," said Ania. "Of Union Street. Acting on behalf of a client."

Nobody said anything for a long time. Mrs Luscombe, by the range, nodded off over her knitting.

"So it's land," I said at last. "That's all it is. Land, and a tramway, and money. Three men dead for a sea front."

Ania looked down at the map. At the red line and the black marks and the long grey curve of the bay. She was quiet for so long that I thought she was not going to answer. When she did, she spoke very softly, the way she had spoken when she told us the story of the dragon.

"No," she said. "Not land. Land is only the way they hold it. What they want is the bay. All of it. Who builds, and where, and who lives here, and who goes. They want to decide what Torbay will be. For a hundred years. Longer." She touched the red line with one fingertip. "This is not the thing they want, Mr Hills. This is only the first thing they are taking."

Fri. 14 Feb. 11.30 p.m. Home. A. Ward discharged. Alibis: Livermead almshouse

(tram); Lodge dinner, Royal Hotel (Brimacombe). Paw found under his stairs: 4¾ in. My prints: 5½ in. Planted. Ward dressed TWO OLD WOLF SKINS in Oct., "to make them supple," for a client of Endacott, Union St. Taken away by carrier before Xmas. B.E.C. tram route laid over Ania's map: sightings lie along it, nearly every one. 14 sales along route since summer, each after a sighting. Buyer always Endacott, for a client. Ania: "They want to decide what Torbay will be."

CHAPTER 14 – The Taowu Mark

> *Tuesday, 18th February 1896. 6.20 a.m. Station desk. W. Narracott, milkman, of Preston, asks for me by name. Will not speak to anyone else.*

Billy Narracott was the first man in this story to see them, and so it was right, I suppose, that he should be the first man to see the mark.

He came into the station at twenty past six in the morning, before it was properly light, still in his milking smock, with straw in his hair and his hands shaking so that he could not get his cap off. The sergeant on nights told him to sit down and wait for the Inspector. Billy would not sit down and would not wait. He said he wanted Constable Hills, him that had written down about his pony in the summer, and nobody else, and he stood by the door and would not move until they fetched me from my bed.

I walked back out to Preston with him in the grey of the morning. He did not say much on the way. Only, once, "I told 'em no, Jack. Twice I told 'em no."

I asked him who.

"That lawyer. Endacott. Twice he come out, all smiles and a good coat, and twice he said there was a gentleman would give me a fair price for the bottom fields. The ones by the sea road. I said they been Narracott fields since my great-

grandfer, and they'll be Narracott fields when I'm under 'em. I said no."

The bottom fields lay between the Torquay road and the sea, a long narrow strip of grazing running down to the low cliff above the beach. I knew where they were. I had seen them that week, marked in red, on Ania's tracing linen, with the Bay Estates Company's line running straight through the middle of them.

* * *

Billy had two ponies. One was old Dobbin, who pulled the milk float and had stood stock still in the lane in August with his ears flat while grey shapes went over the hedge. The other was a young mare called Bess that Billy had bought at Totnes fair in the autumn, his pride and joy, that he was going to put in foal in the spring.

They lay together in the bottom field, near the gate, in the frost.

I will not describe them. I said on Paignton sands that I would describe that kind of thing once and not again, and I meant it. I will only say that whatever had been done to Venning and to Harry Mudge and to Councillor Brimacombe had been done to those two ponies, and done with more time, and more care, as if whoever did it had wanted it to be looked at. And there were tracks all round them in the frost, the same

big four-toed prints. I measured them with my rule. Five inches and a half. The same left forefoot, over and over.

But it was the gate that Billy had brought me to see. He stood a little way off from it and pointed, and would not go nearer.

It was an old five-barred field gate of grey oak, silvered with weather. And on the top bar, cut deep into the wood with a knife, fresh, the cuts still pale and clean, there was a mark.

I copied it into my pocketbook there and then. I have it in front of me. I have looked at it more often than I like to say.

It was a face. Or the front half of a head, seen straight on, crude, the way a child might carve it, but not like a child either, because every line was cut with the same steady depth. A broad, flat head, more like a great cat's than a dog's. Small eyes set close. And jutting up from the lower jaw on either side, two long curved tusks, like a boar's. Round the whole of it, coiled, a long thin tail, going all the way round the head and back to cut across its own beginning.

Under it, in square capitals, also cut with the knife:

TAOWU

Billy said, behind me, "That's from the dragon story. Ent it. The thing that hunts her."

I said I did not know.

"My missus has been telling the children that story since Christmas," said Billy. "Out of the paper. To keep 'em in after dark." His voice cracked. "Now look."

* * *

I reported it, of course. I had to. A milkman's ponies slaughtered and a threat carved on his gate is a police matter, whatever else it is. I wrote it up in proper form at the desk that afternoon, the ponies and the tracks and the carving, and I put in the name of Mr Endacott of Union Street and the two offers for the bottom fields, because Billy had told them to me and they were true.

Inspector Robinson read it standing at my elbow. When he got to the carving he laughed, a short, easy laugh.

"Vandals, Jack," he said. "Youngsters. Somebody's read this dragon rubbish in the paper and thought it'd be a lark to frighten a farmer. As for the ponies, poor beasts, we've had a dog loose on the moor all winter, everybody knows that." He tapped the page where I had written Endacott's name. "And I'd leave that out, if I were you. A respectable solicitor makes a perfectly proper offer for a field, and you put him in a report about a dead pony. It looks like spite. It looks like you've got a bee in your bonnet."

I said it was what the witness had told me, sir.

"Then the witness was upset. Leave it out." He smiled at me and went upstairs.

I did not leave it out. I want that on the record too. It was the first time in six years I had disobeyed a direct instruction from a superior officer, and I did it at the desk with my own pen, and I filed the report with Endacott's name in it, and

Robinson never said a word about it. It was not on the file the next morning. I had not expected it to be. But I had filed it.

* * *

By the end of that week, the mark was all over Torbay.

Not carved, after Billy's gate. Chalked. On walls and doors and the sides of bathing machines, on the piers and the backs of the tram shelters and the wall of the Board School in Curledge Street. Some of it was children, copying what they had seen or been told about. You could tell the children's: the tusks were too big, and they always gave it a smile. Some of it was not children. Some of it was drawn by somebody who knew exactly what it looked like, flat-headed and close-eyed with the long tail coiled round, and had drawn it a great many times before.

The children's skipping rhyme in Winner Street grew a new verse that week. Nobody taught it them, any more than the first. I heard it through Mrs Luscombe's window on the Saturday and I wrote it down, and I will put it here, because I think it was the moment I understood what we had done.

Taowu's out and Taowu's free,
Taowu's walking by the sea,
Longpei's sleeping, can't come out,
Taowu takes whoever's about.

The first verse had been ours. It had sent them indoors to keep them safe. This one was nobody's, and it was not about keeping anybody safe. It was about who the thing would take.

* * *

And then it came home.

On the Sunday morning, Edward took the first car out of the depot at ten past six, Will Coysh's old early turn that he had promised to do in Will's place and had gone on doing every Sunday since, though nobody asked him to. He went up the curling stair to the top deck to wipe the dew off the seats, as he always did. And on the brass hand rail at the head of the stair, exactly where he had found Will's torn button on the night of the last car, somebody had scratched the mark into the metal with a sharp point. Small. Neat. The flat head and the close eyes and the tusks and the long coiled tail.

The car had been locked in the shed all night. The watchman swore nobody had come in.

On the Monday morning, when Mrs Luscombe opened her front door in Winner Street to take in her milk, it was on the door. Chalked, at the height of a man's head, very carefully, in the middle of the upper panel. She could not read the word under it, and she could not hear the children in the street who stopped and stared at it and ran. She stood looking at it for a while, Ania told us, and then she fetched a bucket and scrubbed it off, and went back in, and said nothing about

it to anybody. But that night she put a chair against the door, and she had never done that before in her life.

And on the Monday evening, when I came home off the desk at six o'clock, my wife was standing at our garden gate in Princes Street with her shawl round her and our little girl, Annie, holding on to her skirts, waiting for me, and her face was a colour I had never seen it.

It was on the gatepost. Not chalked. Carved, like Billy's. Cut into the painted wood with a knife, the paint flaked away round it, so that the bare pale wood showed through in the shape of the thing.

The children had found it, coming home from school. Our boy, Johnny, who was six, had told his sister it was the taowu and that it had come for them because of the rhyme, and she had screamed the house down, and the neighbours had come out, and somebody had told Mary what the mark was, and what the papers said it meant.

I got them inside. I put the children to bed, and sat with them until they slept, and then I went down to the kitchen, and Mary was sitting at the table waiting for me, with the lamp turned low. Mary was not a woman who waited for things. She was a fisherman's daughter from Brixham, and she had married a policeman with her eyes open, and in seven years she had never once asked me about my work.

She asked me that night.

"What are you in, Jack?"

I said I was not in anything.

"Don't," she said. "Don't you lie to me in my own kitchen. You go out three nights a week and you don't say where. You come home with your face like a shut door. You write in that little book that isn't your police book, and you hide it in your boot of a night, and you think I don't know. Mr Robinson stops me in Victoria Street, Mr Robinson that never looked at me twice in seven years, and asks after my health, and the baby, and says what a fine steady man my husband is and how he hopes you'll stay that way." Her voice did not rise. It got lower. "And now somebody's cut that thing on my gate. Where my children walk. So I'll ask you again, Jack Hills, and you'll answer me this time. What are you in?"

I told her.

I did not tell her everything. I did not tell her about Ania, beyond that there was a foreign lady who helped us, or about Holmes's name, or about the wolves in the sea. But I told her that there were men in Torbay who had killed three people for land and money, and that the police would not stop them because the police were part of it, and that I and two friends were trying to, on our own, outside the law, because nobody else would. I told her about the dragon. I told her we had made it up. I told her that the thing on our gate was our own story, come back to us with its teeth out.

She listened without saying a word. When I had finished, she sat for a long time looking at the lamp.

Then she said, "Will they stop if you stop?"

I said I did not think so. I said I thought it was past that now. I said I thought that if we stopped, they would know they had won, and they would never stop again.

"Then you'd best not stop," said Mary. She got up and turned up the lamp. "But the children and me are going to my mother's in Brixham tomorrow. And you'll not come for us till it's finished."

I have never loved anybody as much as I loved her at that moment. I did not say so. I have never been much good at saying things.

* * *

We met at Gran's on the Tuesday night, the three of us, with Mrs Luscombe's chair against the door and the scrubbed place still pale on its upper panel.

I showed them the drawing I had made of the mark on Billy Narracott's gate. I had drawn it again, very carefully, from the one on my own gatepost, and the two were the same, line for line.

Edward could hardly look at it. He sat with his hands round his mug and stared into the fire. He had found it on Will's stair. I do not think he ever entirely got over that.

"It's ours," he said at last. "Ent it. It's our story. We made the dragon to keep folk safe, and they've gone and made the

other thing out of it, to frighten 'em. They're using our own story on us."

"We made the taowu too," I said. "Ania put it in. Something that does not give up."

We both looked at Ania.

She was sitting very still at the table with my drawing in front of her. She had been looking at it ever since I put it down, and she had not blinked once. I noticed that. I had stopped noticing when she blinked by then. I noticed when she did not.

"When I made the broadside," she said, "I drew the dragon looking back over her shoulder. At something behind her. You could not see what it was. I did not draw it. I left it out on purpose, so that everybody who looked at the picture would put their own fear there instead."

She touched the flat head on my drawing, the tusks, the long tail coiled round.

"They have finished my picture," she said.

Nobody said anything. The fire settled.

"It is a very good drawing," said Ania. "Better than mine. Whoever drew this has read the old books. The real ones. This is how the taowu looks in the old Chinese pictures. The face like a tiger's. The tusks of a boar. The long tail. I did not put any of that in the broadside. I put in only the name." She looked up. "Somebody went and found out what it was. And then they drew it on Mr Hills's gate."

I felt the hair rise on the back of my neck.

"Why?" said Edward. "Why go to all that trouble? Why not just—" He stopped.

"Just kill us?" said Ania. She said it quite calmly. "Because that would be easy. And this is not easy. This is careful. They are not trying to kill us yet, Edward. They are telling us something."

"Telling us what?"

"That they know who we are. That they know where we sleep, and where we work, and where our children walk. That they know what we made, and that they can take it from us and make it theirs." She folded my drawing in half, very neatly, and handed it back to me. "First they tell you that they know you. Then they tell you what they want."

Outside, in Winner Street, there were no children skipping. It was too late, and too dark, and too cold. But I could hear it anyway, in my head, all the way home through the empty town to my empty house in Princes Street.

Taowu takes whoever's about.

> *Tues. 25 Feb. 11.50 p.m. Home (alone). Taowu mark: Billy N.'s gate (18th), E.H.'s car stair rail (23rd), Mrs L.'s door (24th), my gatepost (24th). Same hand. "They have finished my picture" (Ania). Whoever drew it knows the old Chinese pictures. Mary and children to Brixham. Told Mary. Do not regret it. Insp. R. has spoken to Mary in the*

street. No word from S.H. in a month. Ania: "First they tell you that they know you. Then they tell you what they want."

CHAPTER 15 – The Dragon Gets Loose

Saturday, 7th March 1896. Off duty. Torquay harbour, 4.30 p.m. With E.H. and Ania. Crowd on the Haldon Pier.

I have said that we built a thing and it was no longer ours. In the first fortnight of March 1896 I found out what that meant.

It is hard now to make anybody understand how frightened Torbay was that spring. People who were not there laugh when I tell them. A Chinese dragon. A monster out of a penny broadside. How could grown men and women believe such a thing? But they did not believe it, exactly, any more than they believed in the Devil, exactly. They had three men dead and no one hanged for it. They had a howling in the dark that nobody could explain. They had a policeman who arrested the wrong man and smiled about it. And they had a story, and a face to put on the thing they were afraid of, and the face was chalked on the wall at the end of their street.

The visitors began to go. That was the first thing, and in Torquay it was the thing that mattered most. The hotels, which should have been filling up for Easter, began to empty instead. Sam Hannaford said that the Imperial had had eleven cancellations in one week, and that the manager had taken to drinking brandy before lunch. The bathing machines stood on

the sands at Paignton with their wheels in the tide and nobody to hire them. The cars ran half empty after four o'clock, and by six they ran with no passengers at all.

Then the property began to go. The sales Ania had marked on her tracing linen in red had come one at a time, a fortnight after a sighting, one frightened household at a time. Now they came in a flood. Mrs Ellacott said there were six houses for sale on one road in Preston. The *Directory* carried a whole column of auction notices for the first time anybody could remember. And Mr Endacott of Union Street, acting for a client, bought four of them in the first week of March, without even troubling to go and look at them.

I sat at the desk and read the auction notices in the paper, and saw it. And I felt sick. Because we had done that. Not the howling, not the dead men. But the fear that made an old couple at Preston sell the house they were born in for half what it was worth, to the very people who had killed Harry Mudge, that fear had our dragon's face on it. We had made them a better weapon than any wolf.

* * *

And then there was the business on the Haldon Pier.

There was a ship in Torquay harbour that week, a steamer out of Liverpool that had put in for repairs to her screw, with a mixed crew. Among them were two Chinese sailors, firemen from her stokehold. Nobody in Torbay had

ever seen a Chinese man before outside a picture book. They came ashore on the Saturday afternoon to stretch their legs, and walked along the Strand, and looked in the shop windows, and somebody saw them.

I do not know who started it. I have never found out. I have often thought that somebody started it on purpose. By the time Edward and Ania and I came round the corner from the Strand onto the harbour at half past four, there were sixty or seventy people on the Haldon Pier, fishermen and porters and boys and some respectable-looking men in good coats, and they had the two Chinamen backed up against the rail at the very end, with the water behind them.

They were shouting. *Chinee devils. Brought the dragon. Brought the taowu. Send 'em back.* Somebody threw a stone, and then a fish head, and then another stone, and one of the sailors, a young one, hardly more than a boy, put his hands up over his face and there was blood coming through his fingers.

I was not in uniform. I had no truncheon, no whistle, no authority but my size and my voice, and the voice was a Harberton voice that nobody in Torquay was going to listen to. I went through that crowd anyway. I do not remember doing it. Edward says I picked up a porter by his collar and his belt and moved him out of the way like a sack of coal, and I suppose I must have. I got to the end of the pier and stood in front of those two men with my back to them and my arms out, and I said, in the loudest voice I have ever used in my life,

that I was a police constable, and the next man who threw anything would go into the harbour, and I would put him there.

It stopped them. Not for long. Long enough.

Because in that moment Ania walked through the crowd.

She did not push. She did not need to. She walked through them the way she had come through the gate at Paignton station in November, as if there had been nobody in her way at all, and they let her through without seeming to know they had moved. She came and stood beside me. And she turned to the two sailors, and she spoke to them.

In Chinese.

I did not know it was Chinese then. I knew only that it was no language I had ever heard, quick and soft and rising and falling like a song. The young one took his hands away from his bleeding face and stared at her. The older one went quite grey. He said something back to her, short, and she answered, and he said something else, a question, I thought, from the shape of it. And Ania looked at him for a moment, and said one word, very quietly.

The older sailor stepped back from her. Right back, until he was pressed against the rail of the pier. And he put his two hands together in front of his chest, and bowed to her. A deep, slow, frightened bow, the kind a man makes to something he is not sure he is allowed to look at.

The crowd had gone silent. I could hear the water slapping against the pier legs below us.

Then somebody at the back shouted, *It's the foreign woman! It's her that's brought it!* and the whole thing began to boil up again, and I thought, God help us, this is how it ends, on Haldon Pier with a stone in the back of the head.

It did not end. The harbour master came, with two of his men and a boathook, and behind him, at a run, the constable from the Strand beat, red-faced and blowing his whistle, and between us we got the two sailors into the harbour master's office and the door shut, and the crowd stood about outside for a while, and shouted, and drifted away as the light went.

The young sailor's cheek was laid open to the bone. The harbour master's wife stitched it. The ship sailed on the Monday morning. I never learned their names.

* * *

We walked home along the sea road, the three of us, in the dusk, because none of us could face the tram. For a long time nobody said anything.

Then Edward said, "What did you say to him? The old one. That made him bow."

Ania walked on for a few paces. Then she said, "I told him not to be afraid. I told him we were friends."

"And what did he ask you?"

Another few paces.

"He asked me what I was," said Ania. "Not who. What."

Edward laughed, uncertainly. "And what did you tell him?"

"The truth," said Ania. And she would not say anything else, though Edward asked her three times, all the way to Livermead.

I have thought, since, that there is perhaps one word in Chinese that would make a frightened sailor bow like that to a young woman on a pier in Devon. I have never found out what it is. I have never asked anyone, because I do not think I want to know.

* * *

At Gran's on the Monday night, Edward said what all three of us had been thinking.

"We've got to tell 'em."

He had not touched his cider. He was sitting forward on the bench with his elbows on his knees and his hands knotted together, and his face had a look on it I had seen once before, on the cobbles of the depot yard, when Jim Coysh stood over him.

"We've got to tell the town. Write to the *Directory*. Say the broadside's a forgery, say we made it, say there's no dragon and never was and no taowu neither, it's all a tale, and they can stop being frightened and stop selling their houses

and stop throwing stones at sailors. We've got to, Jack. That boy's face. We did that."

"And who'd believe us?" I said. "Three nobodies. A tram conductor, a desk constable and a foreign woman nobody knows. Saying we forged a paper that the Natural History Society's had read out at a meeting. They'd say we were mad. Or they'd say we were the ones killing people. Robinson would have us in the cells by dinner time."

"Then we go to the Society. To that gentleman that found it. Ania can show him how she made it—"

"And then the whole of Torbay knows who we are, and what we've been doing, and where Ania lodges. If the taowu don't know already, they would then."

"They already know," said Edward. "They carved it on your gate."

There was no answer to that.

We went round it for an hour, like that. I said it would not work. Edward said we had to try. I said that even if every soul in Torbay believed us, you cannot unsay a story; you can only add another story to it, and the old one goes on underneath. My grandmother died believing her grandmother had told her about Longpei. Telling her otherwise would not have taken it out of her head. It would only have made her feel a fool.

All the while Ania sat with her cup in her hands and said nothing.

At last Edward turned to her. "You made it," he said, not angrily, but very tired. "You told it us at Bailey's. You put the taowu in. *Something that does not give up.* You must have known. You know everything. You must have known it'd come to this."

Ania put her cup down on the table.

"No," she said. "I did not know. I thought I did." She was quiet for a moment. "I knew how stories go into people. I knew how fast. I knew which parts they would keep and which they would forget. I knew what it would do to the men with the guns. I knew all of that. I did not know what it would do to the people who did not need to be kept indoors. I did not know that somebody would take it and turn it round." She looked down at her own hands on the table. "I did not know that I could be wrong. I have not been wrong before."

Neither of us knew what to say to that.

I remembered then, for the first time in months, the night at Bailey's when she told us the story, and what Holmes had said afterwards.

You understand that we are telling lies. To frighten people.

To keep people safe, Ania had said.

That is what liars generally say.

He had known. Or he had guessed. And he had let us do it anyway, because it was the best thing we had, and because

he had thought we could manage it. And then he had gone to London and left us to find out what it cost.

I said so. I said it more bitterly than I meant to. I said that Holmes had a good deal to answer for, and that it was very easy to be clever about lies from two hundred miles away.

Ania looked up at me, and there was something in her face I had never seen there before. I would have called it anger in anybody else.

"He is not two hundred miles away, Mr Hills," she said. "He is a great deal further than that. And he did not choose to be."

She would not explain it. She got up and went into the back bedroom and shut the door, and did not come out again that night.

* * *

The letter came the next day.

It came by the first post on the Tuesday morning, the tenth of March, and the postman put it through Mrs Luscombe's door in Winner Street with the coal bill and a seed catalogue. Mrs Luscombe could not read it. She put it on the mantelpiece behind the clock, the way she put everything she could not read, and it was there when Edward came in that evening, and he took it down, and saw what was written on it, and sent Sam Hannaford running for me.

It was a thick, cream-laid envelope, the best quality, the kind you buy from a good stationer in Torquay. It was addressed in a fine, clear, educated hand, in black ink:

RAGE,
At Gran's,
Winner Street, Paignton.

I stood in Mrs Luscombe's kitchen with that envelope in my hand and could not breathe properly.

The name. *Rage*. We had never used it anywhere but in the telegrams. Not once. Not in the pocketbook, not on the trams, not in the street. And *Gran's*. *Zider at Gran's*. That was the code. That was Harberton, and Edward's joke, and Mrs Luscombe's front room, and it was written on that envelope in a stranger's hand as if he had sat by our fire and heard us say it.

"The post office," I said. "Robinson's got the post office. Every telegram we've sent. He's read every one."

On the back the envelope was sealed with black wax. Pressed into the wax, very sharp and clear, was the mark. The flat head and the tusks and the long tail coiled round. But it had not been scratched or drawn. It had been made with a seal, a proper carved seal, square, in the old Chinese manner, cut by someone who knew how. The lines were as fine as hairs.

Inside was a single sheet of the same cream paper. No address. No date. No signature. Five lines, in the same fine hand.

> *The dragon sleeps. The hunter does not.*
> *You have told your story. Now we shall tell ours.*
> *The woman will leave Torbay by Lady Day.*
> *If she does not, the hunter will take whoever is about.*
> *Brixham is not far.*

I read it three times. The third time, I got to the last line and had to sit down.

Brixham is not far. Mary. Thomas and Annie, at her mother's on the quay. Nobody knew they were there except the three of us, and Mary's mother, and Mary.

And whoever had watched us put them on the carrier's cart.

* * *

Ania had come out of the back bedroom at some point while I was reading. She took the letter from my hand without asking, and read it, once, quickly, the way she read everything, and stood holding it under the lamp.

"Lady Day," said Edward. "That's—"

"The twenty-fifth of March," said Ania. "Fifteen days."

"Then you'll have to go," said Edward. His voice cracked. "You'll have to, Ania. Jack's Mary. The children. You can't stay, not after that."

"No," said Ania.

"Ania—"

"No." She folded the letter, very neatly, along its creases. "Do you not see what this says, Edward? Read it again. They do not ask you to stop. They do not ask Mr Hills to stop. They do not ask for the waybill, or the drawings, or the map. They ask for only one thing. That I leave." She looked from one of us to the other. "Three men dead, and a boy's face cut open on the pier, and they have never once been afraid of anything. And now they are afraid of me."

"Why?" I said. "Why you?"

Ania was quiet for a long moment. Outside in Winner Street the wind had got up off the sea, and Mrs Luscombe's loose shutter creaked on its iron.

"Because they do not know what I am either," she said.

I went out into the night and down the hill to the post office, and woke the clerk, and sent a telegram. Not to Baker Street. Ania told me to send it somewhere else, an address in London I had never heard of, and she would not tell me how she knew it.

MAISTER. THEY HAVE WRITTEN. THEY KNOW OUR NAME. THEY WANT ANIA

GONE BY LADY DAY. THEY KNOW WHERE MARY IS. FOR GODS SAKE COME. RAGE.

Tues. 10 Mar. 11.45 p.m. Letter to "RAGE, at Gran's." They know the name and the code: the telegrams have been read. Seal: taowu, carved in the Chinese manner. "The woman will leave Torbay by Lady Day." "Brixham is not far." Ania will not go. "They are afraid of me." Telegram to S.H., new address (from Ania). 15 days.

CHAPTER 16 – Holmes Returns

Tuesday, 17th March 1896. Gran's. 10.40 p.m. S.H. Eight days to Lady Day.

For six days nothing came. No telegram, no letter, no word.

I went out to Brixham on my day off, the Thursday, on the carrier's cart, and sat in Mary's mother's kitchen on the quay with Johnny on my knee and Annie asleep upstairs, and did not tell Mary about the letter. I did not need to. She looked at my face and knew there was something, and did not ask, and I loved her for that too.

But I told her brothers. Mary had four, all fishermen, all bigger than me, and I took them down to the end of the breakwater out of the wind and told them as much as I dared. That somebody might come for their sister and the children. That I could not say who, or why. That the police could not be trusted to stop them. The eldest, Reuben, heard me out without a word, and spat into the harbour, and said, "Then we'll stop 'em." And from that night on, there was always a Brixham man somewhere on the quay outside that house, mending a net or smoking a pipe or doing nothing much, until it was all over.

Brixham fishermen do not hold with policemen, as a rule. I have never been prouder to be married into a family.

At Gran's, through those six days, we waited. Ania sat at the window. Edward came off the cars and sat with her. I came off the desk and sat with them both. Mrs Luscombe laid the extra place at the end of the table every evening, as she had done since Christmas, and every evening it sat there empty, with its slice of ham drying on the plate. Nobody had the heart to tell her to stop.

On the sixth day, the Tuesday, at twenty to eleven at night, there was a knock at the door.

Not a hard knock. Two raps, light, with the knuckle. Mrs Luscombe, who could not hear it, went on knitting. Edward and I looked at each other. I took the poker from the hearth.

Ania was already on her feet. She was not looking at the door. She was standing very straight beside the table with her hands at her sides, and her face was doing something I had never seen it do before. It was trying to do several things at once, and not managing any of them.

"It is him," she said.

Edward opened the door.

* * *

I almost did not know him.

He stood on the step in the dark with the rain behind him, in a long coat I had never seen before, of some dark, close-woven stuff that shed the water like oilskin and did not look like oilskin at all. He had no hat. His hair was wet and

cut shorter than I remembered. He was thinner than he had been at Christmas, much thinner, the bones of his face standing out under the skin, and there were lines at the corners of his eyes that had not been there before, as though he had been a long time somewhere very bright. His left hand was bound up in a strip of white stuff, very clean and close-fitting, wound round the palm and between the fingers, finer than any bandage I knew.

He did not smell of peat smoke, or tobacco, or the sea. He smelt of rain, and, faintly, of something sharp and hot I could not put a name to. Like the air near the tram wires when a car goes by in the wet.

"Mr Harvey," he said. "Hills." Then he looked past us both, into the room, at Ania.

She had not moved. She stood by the table with her hands at her sides, looking at him. And then, slowly, as if she were remembering how it went, she smiled.

I had never seen her smile. Not once, in four months. Edward said afterwards that she had smiled at him, the morning after the night in Church Street, but I do not think it was this. This came a beat late, the way her laugh did in those days, as though it had to travel a long way to get to her face. But when it got there, it was the most real thing I ever saw her do.

"You found me," said Holmes.

"I found you," said Ania.

It was the same thing they had said to each other on the platform at Paignton in November, the other way round.

Mrs Luscombe looked up from her knitting, and saw him, and put it down, and got up, and went to the end of the table and pulled out the chair in front of the place she had laid every night for eleven weeks. She did not say anything. She could not have heard him if he had thanked her. She simply stood beside the chair, a very small, very old woman in a black shawl, and waited.

Holmes looked at the chair, and the plate, and the slice of dry ham. Something happened in his face. Then he came in out of the rain, and sat down in the chair, and picked up the slice of ham in his fingers, and ate it.

Mrs Luscombe nodded, satisfied, and went back to her knitting.

* * *

He did not tell us where he had been. He did not tell us anything about himself at all, that night. Edward asked him, straight out, as Edward always did, and Holmes only said, "Not in London," and held up his bandaged hand for a moment and looked at it as though it belonged to somebody else, and put it down again.

Instead, he asked us for everything.

We gave it him. It took until past two in the morning. I gave him the pocketbook, the private one, and he went

through it from the first page to the last, every entry, with his long fingers turning the pages and his eyes moving fast, and every so often he stopped and asked me a question, short and precise, and I answered, and he went on. The drawing on Paignton sands. Robinson saying *poor Venning*. The inquest. The sightings. Will Coysh's parcel. Saltern's letter from Exeter. The waybill, copied line by line, with its one first-class fare at Livermead. G.P. on the lilies. The cut blotter at Hesketh Lodge and the horsehair in the shutter and the whistle under the desk. The camphor. Ward and his sister and the two old wolf skins made supple for handling, and Mr Endacott of Union Street. The taowu on Billy Narracott's gate and my own gatepost. The letter, with its Chinese seal.

Edward told him about the trams, and the Coysh brothers, and Mr Petherick's peppermints. Ania laid out her map on the table and the tracing linen over it, the red line and the black marks and the red dates of the sales. Holmes looked at that for a long time without saying anything at all.

When it was done, and the fire was nearly out, and Mrs Luscombe had long since gone up to bed, he sat back in his chair and put his fingertips together and looked at the three of us in the lamplight.

"You have done," he said, "in eleven weeks, without me, what I am not sure I could have done with you. I do not say that lightly. I do not say it often." He looked at me. "The waybill, Hills. You copied it before you gave it up. And the

measurement of the prints. You could not have known that either would matter."

"I write everything down," I said.

"Yes," said Holmes. "I know. I have always known." He said it oddly. I did not understand it at the time.

Then he looked down at the map again, at the long red line running round the bay, and his face went cold and still.

"I know how it was done," he said. "All three. The sands, the car, the villa. I knew from the moment I saw the horsehair. And I know, I think, who got on that car at Livermead."

Edward half rose from the bench. "Who? Maister, who?"

"Not yet."

"But you *know*—"

"I think I know. Thinking is not proof, Mr Harvey. And if I say his name in this room tonight, and I am wrong, then we have done what Robinson did to Ward, and I will not do that." He looked round at us. "And if I am right, then saying it before we can prove it will get one of you killed. Very probably you, Mr Harvey, because you will not be able to keep it off your face on the cars. Eight days. We will need all of them."

* * *

I walked him down to the sea front afterwards. He said he had a room at an hotel on the Esplanade, under some name or other, and I said I would see him to it, and he did not argue.

Edward had gone home to Church Street, and Ania had stayed at Gran's. It had stopped raining. There was a thin moon going down over the bay, and the tide was far out, and the sands lay pale and empty all the way to Roundham, with the wet shining on them.

We walked along the Esplanade for some time without speaking. Then, under the lamp by the end of the pier, about where I had stood on the night of the howling in November, I stopped.

I had been carrying it for eleven weeks. I had been carrying it, if I am honest, since the night he looked at his bare wrist in the back room at Bailey's. I did not plan what I said. It came out of me the way the porter had come out of my way on the Haldon Pier.

"Who are you?" I said.

He stopped too, and turned, and looked at me under the lamp.

"You know who I am, Hills."

"I know your name. I know what the papers say. I don't know who you are." My voice was not steady. I did not care. "You look at your wrist for the time when there's no watch on it. You say a night's four degrees when it's freezing. You tell Ted you'd give him your mobile number, and nobody in England knows what that means. You tell me Rage'll outlive all of us, and call it a deduction. You go to London and you're not in London. You send a telegram that knows about a

waybill nobody told you of. You come back in a coat that isn't made of anything, with your hand tied up in something that isn't a bandage, smelling like the tram wires." I had to stop and breathe. "And her. Who is she? Where's she from? What is she? She speaks Chinese to a sailor and he bows to her like she's the Queen. She told me she's from not far from here, only a long way from now. She said you're a great deal further than two hundred miles away, and didn't choose to be. Who are you? Both of you. I've got a wife and two children and another coming, and men who kill people know where they sleep. I've a right to know who I'm doing it for."

He did not answer at once. He stood under the lamp with his bound hand in his coat pocket and looked at me, and his face was very tired, and not unkind.

"Yes," he said at last. "You have a right. I will not pretend you have not."

He turned away from me and looked out over the rail at the sands. The tide was right out. You could see, on the wet pale stretch below us, where the evening's walkers had gone along by the water, a long trail of footprints, already going soft at the edges.

"Look there," he said. "Footprints. Every one of them made by somebody who was here, tonight, in Paignton, in the spring of 1896. In two hours the tide will have them. By morning nobody will ever know they were made." He was quiet for a moment. "Now suppose, Hills, that you were to

find, one morning, on these sands, a set of prints that the tide had not yet come to. Not because it had gone out. Because it had not come in yet. Prints that somebody would make, but had not made. You would not know what to do with them. You would measure them, I expect, and write them down, because that is what you do. And they would make no sense to you whatever, and you would be quite right to be frightened of them."

I did not say anything. I did not know what to say.

"I am exactly who you think I am," said Holmes. "I give you my word on that. I am the man in the newspapers, and the man in the stone hut on the moor, and the man who sat in Bailey's and was wrong about the wolves. All of that is true. It is only that I am not—always—" He stopped, and seemed to search for a word, and not find one he liked. "I am not always where I left myself. Sometimes I am further on. That is the best I can do, Hills. I am sorry. It is a very poor answer to a very good question."

"And her?"

He looked at me then, sharply, and for a moment the old Holmes was back, the one who had peeled off Purvis's moustache and laid it on the table in Bailey's like a dead mouse.

"Ania," he said, "is the most remarkable thing I have ever met. I mean *thing* in no unkind sense. I mean that I do not know another word that is large enough. She is learning,

Hills. You have seen it. She is learning to be what you see when you look at her. She was very bad at it when she came. She is much better now. And she has learned more in four months in Mrs Luscombe's back bedroom, from you and Mr Harvey and a deaf old woman who feeds her ham she cannot eat, than she learned in all the time before." He looked away again. "You have been very good to her. Both of you. You will never know how much it matters."

"Where's she from?"

Holmes was silent for so long that I thought he would not answer at all.

"From a place that does not exist yet," he said. "And may never, if we are careless. That is another reason I need you to be careful."

I thought he meant it as a sort of riddle. A way of saying that she came from some better world, some future England, the kind the chapel preachers talked about. I think now that I was meant to think so. I think that he chose his words very carefully, so that they were true, and so that I would not understand them.

We stood there a while longer. The moon went down behind Roundham.

"How did you know about the waybill?" I said. "Just tell me that."

"Ania told me."

"How? You weren't in London. She said so."

"No," said Holmes. "I was not in London." He took his bound hand out of his pocket and looked at it again, the way he had at Gran's. "She has ways of speaking to me that do not go through the post office in Paignton, Hills. Robinson cannot read them. Nobody can. That is her secret, and it is not mine to tell. I will say only this: she found me where I was, and told me you needed me, and I came. It cost something to come. It was worth it."

He put his hand away.

"Now," he said, in quite a different voice, brisk, the voice he had used at Gran's with the pocketbook, "you will want to know what we are going to do about Lady Day."

I said I did.

"They have told us they are afraid of her," said Holmes. "That is the most useful thing anybody has told us since Mr Harvey sat in Bailey's and said that the dogs of Paignton did not answer. When a man tells you what he is afraid of, Hills, you have him by the collar. On Lady Day, Ania is going to leave Torbay. Publicly. By train. In front of anybody who cares to watch."

"She won't go. She said so."

"She will not go," Holmes agreed. "But they will see her go. And then they will think that they have won. And men who think they have won, Hills, do what they have been waiting to do."

He turned up his collar and walked on along the Esplanade towards his hotel. I stood under the lamp and watched him go. Then I looked down at the sands again.

The walkers' footprints were still there, going soft. And among them, just below where we had been standing, there was one set I had not noticed before. Long, narrow, a man's, going along by the water's edge towards Roundham, and then stopping. Not turning. Not going into the sea. Simply stopping, in the middle of the wet sand, as if whoever made them had come to the end of where he was and stepped off it.

I went down the steps onto the beach and stood over them in the dark. They were the size of Holmes's foot. They were very fresh.

We had walked along the Esplanade, on the paving, the whole way. He had never once set foot on the sand.

I did not measure them. It was the only time in my life I saw a thing like that and did not write it down. I went home to my empty house in Princes Street and lay awake until it was light, and in the morning the tide had been and gone.

> *Wed. 18 Mar. 6 a.m. Home. S.H. returned last night. Thinner. Hand bound. Says he knows how all three were done, and thinks he knows who got on at Livermead. Will not say. Asked him who he is. "I am not always where I left myself. Sometimes I am further on." Asked where Ania is from. "A place that does not exist yet." On Lady Day Ania is to*

leave Torbay by train, publicly. She will not go. They are to think they have won.

CHAPTER 17 – Cornered

Saturday, 21st March 1896. Torquay Directory, p. 5. A letter, unsigned. Four days to Lady Day.

You have told your story. Now we shall tell ours.

They told it on the Saturday, in the *Torquay Directory*, on page five, in a letter that ran to a column and a half under the heading THE DRAGON HOAX: A DISCLOSURE. It was signed *One Who Knows*. It was written in good plain English by somebody who knew how to write for a newspaper, and every word of it was very nearly true.

It said that the broadside of the dragon Longpei, read before the Natural History Society and printed in these columns before Christmas, was a modern forgery. That it had been made, not in 1702, but in the winter just gone, on a kitchen table in Paignton. That the so-called legend had been deliberately put about the town, on the tramcars and in the public houses, by a small society of persons calling themselves RAGE.

It said that this society was composed of a constable of the Paignton police, a conductor of the Torquay Tramways Company, and a young foreign woman of no known origin or occupation, lodging in an unlicensed cider house in Winner Street.

It did not name us. It did not need to. There was one constable at Paignton who was known to drink at Mrs Luscombe's, and one tram conductor who was known to be his friend, and one foreign woman in Paignton, and everybody in the town knew all three.

And then it asked its questions. Very reasonably. Very politely. Why should a policeman forge a monster to frighten the town? Why should these same persons have been seen, again and again, at the scenes of the late dreadful deaths? Why was this constable first upon Paignton sands, before any other officer? Why was he at the tram depot, off duty, at the very hour the last car came in? Why had he been seen with the sister of the man Ward, who was so lately released? What was this RAGE, and what did it want, and who was paying it?

The writer makes no accusation, the letter ended. *He asks only that the people of Torbay, and those charged with their protection, should ask themselves these questions. The dragon was a lie. Who told it, and why?*

I read it at the station desk at eight in the morning, with the sergeant reading it over my shoulder. When I had finished, the sergeant took his hand off the back of my chair, very slowly, as if it had become hot, and went away to the other end of the room, and did not speak to me again.

* * *

They came for me at eleven.

I was sent for to Torquay, to the Superintendent's office in Market Street. Inspector Robinson came with me in the cab. He did not speak on the way, except once, at the bottom of Torre Hill, when he said, quite gently, "I did warn you, Jack," and looked out of the window.

The Superintendent was an old man called Pethybridge, near retirement, a decent, slow, frightened man who had been a good policeman twenty years before and had been sitting behind a desk ever since. He had the *Directory* open in front of him. He had a file. It was a thin file, but it was enough.

It had in it copies of seven telegrams sent from the Paignton post office between November and March, all signed RAGE, all in a sort of country gibberish about dogs and zider and somebody called Maister. It had a statement from the post office clerk that the constable on duty at the Paignton desk had sent the last two himself, in his own hand. It had a statement from a lady on the Esplanade that I had been seen on the night of the eighteenth, at three in the morning, on Paignton sands, alone, standing over some marks in the sand. It had a statement from Venning's former landlady that I had come asking about his effects without authority. It had a statement from a clerk called Saltern, in Exeter, that a man answering my description had visited the late Mr Venning's office on the ninth of January and taken away a private letter. And it had a statement from the Inspector, Thomas Robinson, that on the morning of the eighteenth of January he had

received from me the conductor's waybill from the last car, and that it had subsequently gone missing from the file, and that he had reason to believe I had removed it.

I said that was a lie.

The Superintendent asked me whether I had the waybill.

I said I did not. I said I had a copy of it, in my own pocketbook, made before I handed it in.

The Superintendent asked to see the pocketbook.

I did not give it to him. I want that clear. I stood in front of that desk with my helmet under my arm and the private pocketbook in the inside pocket of my tunic, against my heart, and I thought of every page of it, the whole winter, Holmes and Ania and Edward and Will and Harry and the seal and the map, and Mary at her mother's on the quay at Brixham, and I said that it was my private property and I would not give it up.

Robinson said, very quietly, "That's rather what I was afraid of, sir."

I was suspended from duty that afternoon, pending an inquiry into my conduct. Neglect of duty. Unauthorised communications. Interference with witnesses. Suspicion of removing evidence. They took my warrant card. They let me keep my uniform, because it would have to be returned to the stores in proper form, and there was a form for that, and it had to be signed.

I walked home from Torquay to Paignton, four miles along the sea road, in my uniform without my warrant card,

past Livermead, past Corbyn Head, past the rocks where they had found Will Coysh's cap. People looked at me. A woman crossed the road with her children. A boy on the sea wall at Preston shouted *RAGE* after me and threw a stone, and missed, and ran.

When I got to Princes Street there were two windows broken in the front of my house, and the taowu chalked on my door in red.

* * *

They had Edward the same day.

He was called into the manager's office at the depot at four o'clock, at the end of his turn, and told that the Company no longer required his services. No reason was given. When he asked for one, the manager, who had known him since he was a boy porter, would not look at him, and said only that there had been complaints, and that the Company had new directors since the first of March, and that the new directors had particular views about the character of the men they employed. He gave Edward a week's wages in an envelope, and asked him for his badge and his ticket punch.

Edward asked who the new directors were. The manager said he did not know all their names. He said that the Bay Estates Company had taken a large holding in the Tramways in February, as was only natural, since the two lines were to

join at Livermead, and that there had been changes on the board.

Edward put his ticket punch down on the manager's desk. It had a callus on it the shape of his thumb. He had carried it every working day for a year and a half. Then he walked out across the yard, past the car with Will's button rail at the top of the stair, and past Amos Pengelly, who took his cap off as he went by and said nothing, and past Jim Coysh, who was standing by the shed door. And Jim Coysh, who had knocked him down on those same cobbles eight weeks before, stepped out in front of him, and held out his hand.

"I read that letter," said Jim. "I know you, Ted. You never did what they say. Nor did the constable." He swallowed. "Our Will thought the world of you."

Edward told me that, that night, and then he put his face in his hands and wept, for the first time since Church Street.

* * *

They had Gran's on the Monday.

Two constables I knew, and a sergeant from Torquay I did not, came to Mrs Luscombe's front door in Winner Street at ten in the morning with a paper from the magistrates, and closed her for selling cider without a licence. Which she had done, every day for forty years, with half the Paignton force drinking it. They took her barrel. They took her mugs. They searched the house from top to bottom, for what they did not

say, and turned out every drawer and every cupboard, and pulled up the boards in the back bedroom where Ania slept, and found nothing. Mrs Luscombe stood in her kitchen in her black shawl and watched them do it, and could not hear a word they said to her, and did not try to.

The map was not there. Ania had taken it down on the night the letter came, and given it to Holmes, rolled up inside a length of stovepipe, and I do not know where he kept it after that. Nor was there anything else. Ania had owned, so far as I could ever discover, one grey travelling costume, one hat, one carpet bag, and nothing in it.

When they had gone, Mrs Luscombe swept up, and put the boards back as well as she could, and laid the table. Five places. She had never laid five before. Then she sat down by the empty range and waited for us.

* * *

We met that night in the back room at Bailey's, where it had all begun. Holmes had taken it under a false name, and the landlord, who had his own opinions of the Paignton police, asked no questions. It was the first time the four of us had been in that room together since the afternoon Ania came off the four o'clock train. Edward without his badge. Me without my warrant card. Ania in her grey costume. And Holmes, in a borrowed tweed coat, with his bandaged hand, sitting by the fire.

I was angry. I am not ashamed of it. I had a wife and children hiding behind four fishermen, a broken window in my front room, and the word RAGE thrown after me in the street like a curse, and a man sitting by the fire who could have walked into the Superintendent's office and told him who he was and ended the whole business in a quarter of an hour.

I said so.

Holmes heard me out. Then he said, "Read me the letter again, Hills. The one in the *Directory*."

I had it in my pocket. I read it out.

"A constable," said Holmes, when I had done. "A tram conductor. A foreign woman." He put his fingertips together. "Tell me who is missing."

Nobody answered.

"They know Rage," said Holmes. "They know Gran's. They know the code, the telegrams, the broadside, the kitchen table it was made on. They have been reading our letters since before Christmas. They know where Mrs Hills is. And they do not know that I am here." He looked round at us. "Not one word. Not in the letter to Rage, not in the *Directory*, not in Robinson's file, not in a single statement. Maister is a name in a telegram. They think he is a London friend of Ania's who sends money. They think he went away at Christmas and did not come back. If I walk into the Superintendent's office tomorrow, Hills, I give them the only thing they do not have.

And on Lady Day they will not do what they have been waiting all winter to do. They will wait, and watch, and be careful. And we will never have them."

I did not say anything. I knew he was right. I hated him for it, a little, for about a minute.

"Everything they have done this week," said Holmes, more quietly, "they have done because they are afraid. Of her. Of what you have found. They have taken away your warrant card and Mr Harvey's ticket punch and Mrs Luscombe's cider barrel, and they have told the town that you are the monsters. That is not how men behave who think they are safe. That is how men behave who think they are about to be found out, and want very badly to finish something before they are." He looked at the fire. "On Wednesday they will see Ania go. And then they will think there is nobody left who can stop them."

* * *

Wednesday, 25th March 1896. Lady Day.
Paignton station, 10.15 a.m. up train.

She went.

Or she was seen to go, which, as Holmes said, is all that most people ever know about anything.

It was a fine bright morning, the first real morning of spring, with a soft wind off the bay and the gulls loud over the station roof. I do not know how the word had got about.

Holmes said that he had let it get about, through Sam Hannaford and Mrs Ellacott and two or three others, so that it would reach the right ears. By ten o'clock there were thirty or forty people in Station Square and on the platform, which is a great many for a Wednesday morning in Paignton. They had come to see the foreign woman go.

Ania walked across Station Square from Winner Street, the way Holmes had walked across it in October, without looking at anybody, in her grey costume and her little hat, with her carpet bag in her hand. Edward and I walked behind her. Nobody threw anything. I made sure of that, by walking very close behind her and looking at anybody who looked as if they might. But they said things. I will not write down what they said. One of the things they called her was *witch*, and one of the things they called us was *RAGE*, the way you would say *murderer*.

Inspector Robinson was on the platform. He was standing by the bookstall in his good overcoat, reading a newspaper, as though he had come to buy one and happened to be there. He did not look at us. He watched her over the top of the paper all the way along the platform to the second-class carriage, and when she got in he folded the paper and put it under his arm, and I saw him let out his breath.

And at the far end of the platform, by the gate, a quiet, well-made gentleman of about fifty, in a dark overcoat and a good hat, with grey side-whiskers and a gold-headed stick,

stood waiting for the down train to Kingswear. He did not look at Ania at all. He did not look at anybody. I only noticed him because I had trained myself to notice him. And I only remembered, afterwards, that I had never once in all that winter seen Mr Petherick at Paignton station, or anywhere at all except on the top deck of the 8.40.

Ania let down the carriage window. Edward stood beside it with his cap in his hands and his face working, and could not say anything at all.

She looked at him for a moment. Then she put her hand out through the window, and laid it on his cheek. Just for a second. The crowd made a noise.

"Thank you for the tea, Edward," she said.

Then she looked at me. And she blinked, once, very slowly, the way she had across the fire at Gran's on the night Holmes's telegram came.

The guard blew his whistle. The train moved. She did not wave. She sat back from the window, as Holmes had done at Christmas, and was gone into the steam, and the train was a red lamp going away up the line to Torquay, and then it was nothing.

The crowd broke up. Robinson walked away across Station Square with his newspaper under his arm, unhurried, and got into a cab. The gentleman at the far end of the platform got into the down train when it came in, and I did not see where he got out.

Edward and I stood on the empty platform for a long time.

"Where'll she get off?" Edward said at last. "Jack. Where's she going?"

I said I did not know. It was the truth. Holmes had not told either of us. He had said that what we did not know, we could not show on our faces, and that both our faces were very honest, and that tonight it would matter.

"Why tonight?" said Edward.

I looked up the line, where the train had gone. I thought of what Holmes had said in the back room at Bailey's. *Men who think they have won do what they have been waiting to do.*

"Because she's gone," I said. "And there's nobody left can stop them."

> *Wed. 25 Mar. 11 p.m. Home. Ania left by 10.15 up train, publicly. Insp. R. on platform; watched her in; let out his breath. G. Petherick at far end of platform, waiting for the Kingswear train. Never seen him at the station before. E.H. dismissed from Tramways (21st); B.E.C. now holds shares, new directors. Mrs L. closed (23rd), house searched, nothing found. I am suspended. S.H. says tonight. Waiting.*

CHAPTER 18 – Kents Cavern

Thursday, 26th March 1896. 1.20 a.m. Kents Cavern, Wellswood. S.H., E.H., self. Ania already there.

I was sitting in the dark in my kitchen in Princes Street, with the broken window boarded and the lamp out, when Sam Hannaford tapped on the back door at a quarter to midnight. He was out of breath and very frightened, and he did not come in. He said only, "Maister says Kents Cavern. Now. Bring a lantern and don't light it till you're inside the wood," and was gone over the back wall before I could ask him anything.

Edward was waiting for me at the bottom of Winner Street. Holmes had sent for him too. We did not take the road. We went the long way, by the lanes behind Preston and over the top by Chelston, and down through the fields to Torquay, four miles and more in the dark, keeping off the sea road where the cars ran and the constables walked. We did not speak. There was a little thin cloud over the moon and a wind off the sea, and twice, out over the bay, very far off, we heard them. Not the full cry. A single voice, rising, and then silence.

No dog answered. No dog had answered all winter.

Kents Cavern lies on the eastern side of Torquay, above Wellswood, in a steep wooded hillside going down towards

the sea at Anstey's Cove. In those days there was a cottage at the foot of the hill where the guide lived, and a path going up through the trees to the mouth of the cave, which was a low black arch in the limestone with an iron gate across it. People had been coming to look at the bones in that cave for fifty years. Mr Pengelly, the great man of the Natural History Society, had spent half his life digging in it, and found the bones of things that had lived in England before there were Englishmen. Bears. Hyenas. Lions. Wolves.

And since Christmas, nobody had gone near it after three in the afternoon, because the dragon breathed there.

Holmes was waiting for us at the edge of the wood, below the cave mouth, standing so still among the trees that I walked within three yards of him before I saw him. He had the bandaged hand inside his coat. He did not say good evening.

"They have been and gone," he said. "An hour ago. Ania watched them. Light your lantern now, Hills, and keep it low. Mr Harvey." He put his good hand on Edward's arm, which I had never seen him do. "You will find this very hard. I am sorry for it. I would spare you, if I could, but I need you to see it, and I need you to remember what you see. Can you do that?"

Edward said, "It's Will. Ent it."

Holmes did not answer. That was answer enough.

* * *

Ania was at the mouth of the cave.

She was standing in the black arch just inside the gate, which had been opened, the padlock hanging loose on its chain. She was in the same grey costume she had worn on the platform at Paignton that morning, with her carpet bag at her feet, and her hat gone, and she looked as though she had been standing there for a long time. Holmes told me later that she had got off the train at Torquay, the next station, and walked straight up through the town to Wellswood in broad daylight, and gone into the woods above the cave, and waited there among the trees until dark, and through the dark, without moving, for nine hours.

She said, "They came at a quarter to eleven. A cart, from the Babbacombe road, with no lamps. Two men. One drove the cart and stayed with it. He was a hired man. He was afraid, and he drank from a bottle the whole time. The other one opened the gate with a key. He was tall. He spoke well, when he spoke to the driver. He did not speak much." She paused. "They carried something in between them, wrapped in sacking. They were inside for forty minutes. Then the tall one came out alone, and locked the gate, and they drove away towards Babbacombe."

"Did you see his face?" I said.

"Yes."

"Do you know him?"

Ania looked at Holmes. Holmes shook his head, very slightly.

"Not yet, Hills," he said. "Tomorrow."

I wanted to take him by the collar. I did not. Edward was standing beside me holding the lantern, and his hand was shaking so that the light went up and down the wet rock, and I took the lantern from him instead, and held it steady, and we went in.

* * *

I had been inside Kents Cavern once before, as a boy, on a Sunday school outing, with a guide and a candle and thirty other children. I remembered it as a wonderful place. Great dim chambers one after another, going back into the hill, with the roof hung with stone icicles and the floor rising in stone pillars to meet them, and everything wet and glittering and the colour of old ivory in the candlelight. I remembered the guide telling us that the bones of a cave bear had been found in the very spot where we stood, and the girls screaming, and the boys pretending not to be frightened.

At night, with one lantern, without a guide, it was not a wonderful place.

The passage from the gate went down and in, low, so that I had to stoop, and then opened out into the first chamber, and then narrowed, and opened again. The lantern light went a little way into the dark and stopped. Beyond it there was

only black, and the sound of water dripping, slow, somewhere far in, and our own breathing. Holmes went first, with no light of his own, as surely as if it were broad day. Ania went beside him. Edward and I came behind, with the lantern.

It was cold. Not the cold of the March night outside, which was soft and damp. A deep, still, unchanging cold, that came up out of the rock and went into your bones and stayed there. The guide said afterwards that it is the same cold in that cave in August as in January, and has been since before the Flood.

We went through three chambers. Then the passage turned, and went down a slope of wet clay that somebody had cut steps into, and at the bottom of it we came into a great vaulted place, larger than the nave of St John's, with the roof lost somewhere above the lantern light, and a floor of broken stone and old dug earth, and pillars standing up out of it like the trunks of trees in a wood.

And at the far side of it, on a long flat shelf of white stone a little above the floor, there was Will Coysh.

I said on Paignton sands that I would describe such things once and not again. I broke that promise for Harry Mudge, and I will break it here, one more time, because Holmes asked us to remember what we saw, and because what was done in that cave was meant to be seen. It was done for an audience. I think the only honest thing I can do is to be that audience, and set it down.

He lay on his back on the white stone, in his conductor's uniform, with his cap gone and his hair combed. His hands were crossed on his breast, the way they cross the hands of the dead in a church. His eyes were closed. His face was grey-white, like the stone under him, and perfectly still, and not, in itself, terrible. Whatever had been done to him had been done to his throat and his chest, and somebody had buttoned his tunic up over it, to the collar, neatly, with every brass button in its place but the one I had found at the head of the stair on the last car.

And all round him, on the stone, there were bones.

They had been laid out in a ring. Not thrown down; arranged, with care, each one touching the next, like the stones of a fairy ring in a field. Long bones and short ones, brown and stained with age. Jawbones, with the teeth still in them, big yellow curved teeth, a hand's length some of them. Skulls. I counted eleven skulls. Some were the size of a dog's. Some were bigger than any dog's I had ever seen. Holmes said afterwards that they were from the cave's own diggings, the old deposits that the Society had sifted through and left in heaps in the further chambers, and that whoever had laid them out had known which were wolves and which were bears and which were the great spotted hyenas that had denned there a hundred thousand years ago. The wolves' skulls were nearest to Will. They were all turned inwards, towards him. As if they had been watching him.

On the wall above the shelf, scratched into the soft wet face of the limestone with a knife and then blackened over with candle smoke so that it stood out, was the mark. Large, this time. As high as a man. The flat head and the close eyes and the tusks. The long tail coiled all the way round.

And under it, not TAOWU. Another word, in the same square capitals.

LONGPEI.

The dragon's name. Over the place where she breathed. With the hunter drawn above it.

Edward made a sound. I put my hand on his shoulder. He did not shake it off.

* * *

Holmes did not look at the bones, or the mark, for long. He went straight to Will. He knelt on the wet floor beside the shelf with his bandaged hand held against his chest and looked at the dead man's face, very closely, for a long time, and then at his hands. Then he laid two fingers of his good hand on the crossed wrists, lightly, and took them away.

"Cold," he said.

"It's a cave," I said. "Everything's cold."

"Not like this. Feel, Hills."

I did not want to. I did. He was cold the way a stone is cold. Cold all the way through, with no give in him at all. And there was no smell. He had been dead, if he had died on the

night of the seventeenth of January, for more than nine weeks, and there was no smell of it whatever. Only a faint, clean, wet smell, like a dairy.

"He has been kept in ice," said Holmes. "Since the night of the last car. Packed in it, in sawdust, in the dark. There are not many places in Torbay where a man can keep a body in ice for nine weeks, Hills. A fishmonger's cold store would be noticed. A butcher's would be noticed. But a gentleman's ice house, in the grounds of a big villa, dug into a hillside under the trees, that nobody but the gardener goes into from one year's end to the next—" He stopped. "That would not be noticed at all."

I thought of the cart that had come from the Babbacombe road with no lamps. The big villas up on the hill above Babbacombe. Their ice houses in the trees.

Then Holmes did a thing I did not expect. He leaned over Will Coysh and very gently took hold of the dead man's crossed hands, and lifted the right one a little away from the breast.

There was something in it. Closed in the stiff cold fingers, held against the tunic, where the hands had been crossed over it.

A conductor's bell punch. Brass, on a worn leather strap. The kind every conductor on the Torquay Tramways carried and punched the tickets with, a hundred times a day.

Holmes eased it out of Will's fingers, and held it up to the lantern, and turned it so that we could see the brass plate on the back, where the Company stamped each man's number.

Edward said, "That's mine."

It was. Number forty-one. He had laid it down on the manager's desk at the depot five days before, when they sacked him, with the callus of his thumb worn into the side of it.

"In the morning," said Holmes quietly, "somebody will come to this cave, and find Mr Coysh, and the bones, and the mark. And a policeman will come, and take Mr Coysh's hands apart, and find this in them. And it will be Mr Harvey's, by the number, and everybody will know that Mr Harvey was dismissed from the Company last week for reasons it did not care to give, and that he is one of the three persons named in the *Directory* as RAGE. And that will be the end of RAGE, and very likely the end of Mr Harvey, at the end of a rope in Exeter gaol."

Nobody said anything. The water dripped somewhere in the dark.

Holmes put the bell punch into his own coat pocket.

"And now," he said, "it will not be there."

* * *

It was while he was putting it away that Ania lifted her head.

She had been standing a little apart from us all this while, at the edge of the lantern light, looking not at Will but past him, into the dark at the back of the chamber, where the floor went down between the pillars into a lower passage that the guides did not show to visitors. She had not moved and had not spoken. Now she lifted her head, sharply, the way she had at Gran's on the night of the last car, and said, very low:

"Listen."

We listened.

At first there was nothing but the water. Then, from far down in the dark, below us, in the passage that went on into the hill, there came a sound.

It was a breath.

I do not know how else to say it. A long, slow breath, drawn in, out of the dark, deep, deeper than any man's or any animal's I had ever heard, so deep that I felt it in the floor through my boots more than I heard it. And then, after a long time, let out again. And with it, against our faces, there came a breath of air out of the passage. Cold. Colder than the cave. Smelling of wet stone and of something else, something old and rank and animal, like the back of a fox's earth.

The lantern flame leaned over and nearly went out.

Then, very faint, down there in the dark, under the hill, something moved on stone. Several somethings. The click of claws. Quick. Light. Going away.

And then nothing at all.

I have stood on the Esplanade and listened to that howling a dozen times. I have never been as frightened as I was in that moment, in that cave, with Will Coysh lying dead at my elbow and his bones round him and that breath going in and out of the hill.

"They are here," said Ania, very quietly. "Below. They came to look."

"What breathed?" said Edward. His voice was a whisper. "Ania. What *breathed*?"

She did not answer him.

Holmes had not moved. He stood with his hand on the pocket where he had put the bell punch, looking down the passage into the dark, and his face was as white as Will's.

"Caves breathe, Mr Harvey," he said at last. "The air goes in and out of them with the changes in the weather outside. It is well known. Mr Pengelly wrote a paper on it." He did not take his eyes from the dark. "That is what breathed."

I have often wondered since whether he believed it. I think he wanted to.

We came out of Kents Cavern at a little after two in the morning, and Holmes locked the gate behind us with a key he should not have had, and we went down through the wood in the dark. Nobody said anything. Below us, at Anstey's Cove, the sea came in over the shingle, slow, like breathing.

* * *

The guide's boy found Will Coysh at a quarter past nine that morning. Holmes had seen to that too. Sam Hannaford had paid the boy a shilling to go up early and look at the gate, because there had been talk of lights in the wood.

By eleven half of Torquay was on the hill below the cave, and the police had a cordon across the path, and the *Directory* had a man there with a notebook. I was in the crowd, in my own clothes, with my cap down. I was not a policeman any more. I could stand where I liked.

Inspector Robinson came at half past eleven. He went up to the cave and in, with Dr Hext and two constables, and was in there for some time. And when he came out again, into the daylight, at the cave mouth, he stood for a moment on the path, and I saw him say something to the sergeant beside him, sharp and low. The sergeant shook his head. Robinson said something else. The sergeant shook his head again, and spread his hands.

I was close enough, by then, to hear the last of it. I had worked my way up through the crowd to the cordon.

"His hands," Robinson was saying. "There was nothing in his hands? Nothing at all? On the stone? Under him?"

"Nothing, sir. We looked. Nothing in his hands at all."

Robinson stood there for a moment longer. Then he looked up, over the cordon, over the crowd, and his eyes found me, at the front, in my own clothes, with my cap down.

And for the first time in all the years I had known him, there was nothing pleasant in his face at all.

He knew. Not what had happened. But that something had. And that I knew what he had been looking for.

> *Thurs. 26 Mar. 11 p.m. W. Coysh found in Kents Cavern (by us, 1.20 a.m.; by guide's boy, 9.15). Laid out in a ring of old bones, wolves' skulls turned in. Mark on wall, man-high; under it LONGPEI. Body kept in ice since 17 Jan. (S.H.): a gentleman's ice house. Cart from the Babbacombe road. E.H.'s bell punch (no. 41) in W.C.'s hand: S.H. took it. Something breathed below us. Claws on stone. S.H.: "Caves breathe." Insp. R. asked what was in the dead man's hands. He was looking for the punch. He looked at me.*

CHAPTER 19 – The Reconstruction

Friday, 27th March 1896. 4 p.m. Back room, Bailey's. S.H., E.H., Ania, self. S.H.: "His name is Charles Eden."

He told us the name at four o'clock on the Friday afternoon, in the back room at Bailey's, with the shutters up and the fire lit, the day after we found Will.

He had been out since dawn. He came in with mud to the knees of his borrowed tweed and a long cardboard box under his good arm, and something in his face I had not seen there since the night he peeled off Purvis's moustache. He put the box on the table, unopened, and stood with his back to the fire, and looked at the three of us.

"His name," he said, "is Charles Eden."

Edward said, "Who?"

But I knew it. It went through me like cold water. I had my pocketbook out before I knew I was reaching for it, turning back, back, through January and Christmas, to the second week of December, and there it was, in my own hand, from something Sam Hannaford had told Edward in the kitchen at the Imperial.

Mr C. Eden, of the Natural History Society, bought Bovey's box of old pamphlets, 7s 6d.

Found the dragon paper in it. To read it to the Society.

"The gentleman who found the broadside," I said. "Who read it out at the Society. Who put it in the paper."

"The same," said Holmes.

Ania said nothing. She was sitting very upright by the window, with her hands in her lap. She had known since Wednesday night at the cave mouth, when she saw his face in the dark. I think she had known a good deal longer than that.

* * *

I should say who he was. Holmes told us that afternoon, and I learned the rest later, from a great many people, most of whom had liked him.

Charles Eden was forty-four years old. His father had made a fortune in the Bristol sugar trade, and the son had come to Torquay young for his chest, and stayed. He lived in a large white villa called Ravenscroft, on the hill above Babbacombe, with a view clear across the bay to Berry Head, and a garden running down through the trees towards the sea. He was a bachelor. He was a Justice of the Peace. He sat on the committee of the Natural History Society and had been, for six years, the Honorary Curator of its museum on the Babbacombe Road, with charge of its cases and its stores and its keys, including the key to the gate of Kents Cavern, which the Society held for its excavations. He was a great collector.

Birds' eggs, fossils, old coins, and above all the arts and curiosities of the East, India and China and Japan, which he had travelled to see as a young man and wrote learned little papers about for the Society's *Transactions*. He sailed his own yacht. He fished for salmon on the Dart with a horsehair line, as his grandfather had, because he said gut was vulgar. He was charming, and clever, and generous to the poor of Babbacombe, and he was called Charlie by everybody who knew him at all well, which was a great many people.

He had dined with Councillor Brimacombe. He had sat on the bench beside the magistrates who dismissed Absalom Ward, and nodded when the chairman rebuked the police. He was a friend of Inspector Robinson's. He had a large ice house in the woods below Ravenscroft, dug into the hillside under the trees.

And he was a director, since the first of March, of the Torquay Tramways Company.

* * *

"How long have you known?" I said.

"Since the horsehair," said Holmes. "Or since the night I came back, when you read me Ania's account of Hesketh Lodge. I did not have the name then. I had the shape of the man. I have spent the last ten days fitting the name to the shape, and making sure, and finding the things I needed. I found the last of them this morning." He put his good hand on

the cardboard box. "And I will tell you how it was done. All of it. But not here."

"Where?"

"Where it began," said Holmes. "For him. Not for us. Tonight at nine o'clock, Mr Charles Eden will go to the museum of the Natural History Society on the Babbacombe Road, because he will receive at six o'clock a note in the hand of Mr Endacott of Union Street, asking him to meet a gentleman there privately on a matter of great urgency touching the Kents Cavern affair. Mr Endacott did not write it. Ania did." He glanced at her. "It is a very good hand."

"And we'll be there," said Edward.

"We will be there," said Holmes. "All four of us. And I will tell him what he did, in front of the people he did it to. And then, I think, he will do something foolish. Men like Eden do not run when they are frightened. They run when they are found out by persons they have despised. He has despised the three of you all winter. That is his weakness. It is the only one I have found."

* * *

9.05 p.m. Museum of the Natural History Society, Babbacombe Road. C. Eden arrives by his own carriage. Alone.

The museum was a tall stone building on the Babbacombe Road, with a great hall inside lit by a skylight that was black at that hour, and galleries round it, and the cases of the Kents Cavern finds down the middle of the floor in long glass rows. Holmes had a key to the side door. I did not ask where he had got it.

We waited in the dark among the cases. One gas jet, turned low, at the far end of the hall by the Curator's desk. Edward and I stood back in the shadow of a gallery pillar. Ania stood by the case of wolves' skulls. Holmes sat at the Curator's desk, in the Curator's chair, with his cardboard box in front of him, and his bandaged hand resting on the lid.

Charles Eden came in by the front door at five past nine, with his own key, and walked down the length of the hall towards the light, unhurried, taking off his gloves. A tall man, slim, very well dressed, with fair hair going grey at the temples and a fine-boned, clever, pleasant face, the kind of face you trust at once and go on trusting long after you should stop. He was half way down the hall when he saw that the man in his chair was not Mr Endacott, and stopped.

He did not start, or go pale, or reach for anything. He only stood quite still among the cases of bones, with his gloves in one hand, and looked at Holmes, and then, slowly, round the hall, until he found Edward and me in the shadow of the pillar, and then Ania by the wolves.

When he saw Ania, something went over his face, very quick. Then it was gone.

"Ah," he said. "The constable. And the conductor. And Miss—I am afraid I never knew your other name." He smiled at her. "I thought you had left us." He turned back to Holmes. "And you, sir, I do not know at all. Which is unusual, in Torquay. You are in my chair."

"I am," said Holmes. "My name is Sherlock Holmes."

I watched Eden's face when he heard that. I have watched a great many men's faces, as a policeman, when they understood that they were finished. I had never seen one do what his did. It did not fall. It went very still and very interested, like a man at a chess board who has just seen a move he had not expected, and admires it.

"Well," he said softly. "Well, well. Then the telegrams to London were—. Maister." He laughed, a little. "We thought you were a Polish uncle."

"Sit down, Mr Eden," said Holmes. "There is a chair. I am going to tell you what you did. You will correct me if I am wrong. I shall be interested to see whether you do."

Eden looked at the chair. Then he sat down in it, and crossed his legs, and laid his gloves on his knee.

* * *

I will not set down all of what Holmes said that night. It went on for an hour and twenty minutes, and I have it in the

pocketbook, sixteen pages of it, in a hand that gets worse as it goes. I will set down the heart of it.

He began with the box. He opened it, and took out the things in it one by one, and laid them on the Curator's desk under the gas jet.

The first was a thing I had never seen before. A sort of iron bar, curved to fit across the palm of a man's hand, with two rings to go over the first and fourth fingers, and fixed along its edge, four curved blades, like the claws of a great cat, each as long as my finger and filed to a point.

"A *bagh nakh*," said Holmes. "A tiger's claw. From India. A weapon for murder, Mr Harvey, made to look like the work of an animal. They were used, I believe, by assassins in the service of princes, two hundred years ago. This one was in a glass case in the gallery of Indian curiosities at Ravenscroft until a fortnight before Mr Venning died, according to Mr Eden's housemaid, who dusted it every Tuesday and noticed when it went. It was in the ice house at Ravenscroft this morning, in a toolbox under the sawdust, with the blood still black in the joints." He laid it down. "Four claws, Ania. Always four. Always the same distance apart."

Ania did not move. But I saw her right hand, in her lap, open and spread its fingers, slowly, and close again.

The second thing was a pole. The handle of a garden hoe, cut short, and on the end of it, screwed on, a heavy foot of cast iron, the size and shape of a great wolf's left forefoot, pad and

toes and claws. Five inches and a half across. Holmes did not need to tell me the measurement. I had paced it out on Paignton sands, on my knees, in the fog.

"Mr Venning was killed," said Holmes, "not on the sands, but in the boathouse at Ravenscroft, where Mr Eden had asked him to come at night with his instruments, as he had asked him to come on several nights before, to take observations along the foreshore after dark. Observations, Hills, of the times and places at which certain animals were heard. Mr Venning had been made very uneasy by that commission. When he refused to sign the Company's false certificate as well, he had to be got rid of. He was killed with the claw, in the boathouse, and carried round by sea in Mr Eden's own dinghy, at night, to Paignton sands, and laid on the tide line facing the water. And then Mr Eden walked backwards down the beach into the sea, stamping this into the wet sand as he went, one print, one stride, the same foot every time, and waded away along the shallows to his boat, where the water takes every mark. The prints went into the sea and did not come out. They could not. There was nothing to come out."

He laid the pole down.

The third thing was a roll of grey fur. Two skins, very old, cleaned and dressed and supple, worn bare in patches, rank with camphor even from where I stood. Holmes unrolled one

a little way on the desk, and it was the whole hide of a wolf, head and all, the lips drawn back from the dry yellow teeth.

"Presented to the Society's museum in 1851 by a gentleman returned from Russia," said Holmes, "and entered in its register, which I have read this morning. Struck off the register in October last, on the order of the Honorary Curator, as damaged beyond repair by the moth. Sent, through Mr Endacott, to Mr Absalom Ward of Torwood Street, to be made supple. So that they could be handled. So that a man could carry a body wrapped in them, and leave hair on a carpet and on a tramcar seat, and on the stone in Kents Cavern. They were in the ice house too." He looked at Eden. "With Mr Coysh, until Wednesday night."

Eden said nothing. He was watching Holmes with that same still, interested face.

The fourth thing Holmes took out of the box was a coil of fine black line, very long, wound on a wooden card. Horsehair. The kind they used on the Dart for salmon in his grandfather's day.

"Councillor Brimacombe," said Holmes, "bolted his study door with his own hand at half past nine, as he always did. He was expecting a visitor by the garden. A gentleman he trusted, who had written to say that he too had doubts about the Bay Estates Company, and knew its owners' names, and would bring the proof to him privately, after dark, so that they might stand up together in the Council on Monday. The Councillor

opened his shutter to him himself. And when it was done, and the papers burned in the grate, and a square cut out of the blotter where the Councillor had pressed down on his letter of the Thursday, his visitor took the whistle out of the speaking tube beside the fireplace, and put his mouth to it, and howled." Holmes paused. "Down the tube, Mr Harvey. To the kitchen. And through the walls of the whole house. Then he stepped out of the window, and drew the shutter to behind him, and dropped the bar into its cradle from outside with a loop of this line passed through the crack, and drew the line away after it. One hair caught in the hinge. One. Ania found it."

"And the dog?" said Edward. His voice was hoarse. "Gyp. In the scullery."

"Shut in by the butler," said Holmes, "who was paid five pounds to do it and to stay upstairs whatever he heard, and who told me so this afternoon, in the back parlour of the Torbay Inn, weeping, when I told him what else he would be charged with if he did not." He looked at Eden. "Lang is a weak man. You choose weak men, Mr Eden. It is your second weakness. I had not noticed it until today."

* * *

And then the last car. He came to it last.

"The 10.50 from the Strand," said Holmes. "Mr Eden boarded at the Livermead stage, by Corbyn Head, having

walked down to it from a carriage left in the lane above. He paid his fare to Mr Coysh, first class, inside. He has always travelled first class." He took out of the box my own pocketbook copy of the waybill, which he had borrowed from me that afternoon, and laid it beside the claw. "It is the only fare on that sheet after Torre Abbey. Under the cliff, in the dark, where there are no houses and no lamps, he went forward to the front platform, and killed Mr Mudge. And bound his hands to the controls with his own muffler, and turned the controller round to full, and stood him up to drive his car home. Mr Coysh he did not kill. Not then. He needed him. He needed to know where the parcel was that Mr Venning had left on Mr Coysh's car in October, with his own copy of everything in it. So he made those marks in the saloon with the claw, for the look of the thing, and took Mr Coysh off the back platform where the car slows for the curve at Corbyn Head, to the carriage waiting in the lane, and dropped his cap on the rocks. The car ran on to Paignton without them. A dead man drove it."

Edward had his hand over his mouth.

"Mr Coysh told him where the parcel was," said Holmes, very quietly. "I am sorry, Mr Harvey. I think he told him quite soon. And the depot watchman, who was paid, as Lang was paid, broke open the locker while the yard was full of lamps and shouting, and nobody looked at him because he was being sick against the wall. And then Mr Coysh was put in the ice

house at Ravenscroft, under the sawdust, against the day he might be useful." He laid both hands on the desk. "And he was useful. On Wednesday. With Mr Harvey's ticket punch in his hand, which the new director of the Tramways Company had taken from the manager's drawer on Saturday afternoon."

There was a long silence in that hall. The gas jet hissed. Outside, very faint, on the Babbacombe Road, a cab went by.

Then Charles Eden smiled, and uncrossed his legs, and leaned back in the chair.

"It is very good," he said. "Truly. I should like to have heard it in other circumstances. You will forgive me if I do not tell you whether it is right."

"You need not," said Holmes. "I did not ask you here to confess. I asked you here so that you would know that we know. All of it. And so that the people you did it to could see your face while you heard it."

"How very sentimental." Eden turned his head and looked at Edward, and at me, without much interest, the way you might look at the furniture. "I confess I had not expected the furniture to be so attentive." His eyes went to Ania, and stayed on her a moment longer, and something went over his face again, that same quick thing. "Nor the foreign young lady. I have wondered about you a great deal, Miss Ania. We all have. You read too fast. You see too much. You were not on the London train, I take it."

"No," said Ania.

"What are you?"

It was the second time I had heard that question asked of her. She looked back at him, steady, unblinking.

"Something that does not give up," she said.

* * *

The front door of the museum opened.

We all heard it. The big door at the far end of the hall, behind Eden, swinging back on its hinges, and the cold air coming in, and boots on the stone, several pairs. Eden did not turn round. He only smiled a little more.

Inspector Robinson came down the hall between the glass cases with a lantern in his hand and three constables behind him. Two were Torquay men I did not know. The third was Bartlett, from the Strand beat, the red-faced constable who had come running up the Haldon Pier with his whistle on the day of the Chinese sailors.

"Mr Eden," said Robinson, very smooth, very easy. "I'm sorry to trouble you, sir. We had word of lights in the museum at this hour, and with the doors forced, I thought—" He stopped, and let the lantern light fall across the four of us, and across the desk, and the things laid out on it. The claw. The iron foot on its pole. The grey skins. The coil of horsehair. "Well," he said. "Well, now. Hills. Suspended from duty, in a building he's broken into, at night, with a parcel of—" He looked at the claw and his face did something, just for a

moment. "With a parcel of stolen property. And Harvey. And the young woman who left us on Wednesday." He looked at Holmes in the Curator's chair. "And a gentleman I don't know."

"You know him, Thomas," said Eden, quite pleasantly, without turning round. "You have been reading his telegrams since November. It is Maister. His name is Holmes. The London one."

Robinson went still.

I have thought since that it was the only time I ever saw Thomas Robinson surprised. He stood there with the lantern, and the colour went out of his handsome face from the forehead downwards, like a blind coming down a window.

Then he recovered himself. I will say that for him. He recovered very fast.

"I don't care if he's the Archbishop of Canterbury," he said. "Housebreaking is housebreaking. Bartlett, take Hills. You two, the conductor and the other gentleman. And bring all that." He nodded at the desk. "It'll be evidence."

The two Torquay constables moved towards the desk.

"If you touch those things, Inspector," said Holmes, without getting up, "they will be evidence. Of your own part in this. I should think very carefully."

"I've nothing to think about."

"Then let me give you something." Holmes did not raise his voice. "At three o'clock this afternoon, in the back parlour

of the Torbay Inn, a butler called Lang made a statement to me, in writing, in his own hand, about the night his master died, and who paid him five pounds to stay upstairs. At five o'clock he made the same statement again, on oath, before a magistrate at Newton Abbot, where nobody dines at Ravenscroft. A copy of it is in London tonight. Another is with a solicitor in Exeter. The statement names the man who paid him." He paused. "It was not Mr Eden. It was the person who carried Mr Eden's money. Lang knew him very well. He had given him a cigarette."

Nobody in that hall moved.

Bartlett, the red-faced constable, who had come halfway to me with his hand out for my arm, stopped where he was. He looked at me. Then he looked at Robinson. I saw him make up his mind. I saw him put his hand slowly back down at his side.

"Sir," he said to Robinson. "Sir, I think we'd best—"

"Be quiet, Bartlett."

And while Robinson was saying it, and while every one of us was looking at Robinson, Charles Eden stood up.

He did it without any hurry at all. He picked up his gloves from his knee, and drew them on, finger by finger, the way Holmes had drawn on his gloves at Bailey's in October. And he looked at Holmes across the desk.

"I think I shall go home, Mr Holmes," he said. "It is late. And I find the company tiresome." He turned to Robinson.

"Thomas, I should take your men away if I were you. You have quite enough to think about."

Then he walked away down the hall between the glass cases, towards the door, past Robinson, past the constables, past Bartlett, and none of them moved to stop him. I moved. I took two steps, and Holmes said, "Hills," very sharp, and I stopped. I do not know why I stopped. I have asked myself every day since.

At the door, Eden turned back.

"You have been very clever," he said, "all of you. I congratulate you. But you have only found me." He smiled, and it was the same pleasant, clever smile he had given the Society when he read them the dragon paper. "I am the hand, Mr Holmes. You have not found the arm. You will not. I promise you that."

The door closed behind him.

A moment later we heard his carriage in the Babbacombe Road. Not walking. Going fast, very fast, the horses at a gallop, and the wheels loud on the macadam. Going not down the hill towards Ravenscroft and the sea, but up. Inland. Away from the bay, up past Ellacombe and Upton towards the Newton road, and the long climb beyond it towards the moor.

Robinson stood in the middle of the hall with his lantern and did not say anything at all. Then he turned round and walked out after Eden, and his two Torquay men went with

him. Bartlett did not. Bartlett stayed where he was, with his helmet in his hands.

"He's going the wrong way," said Edward. "Ravenscroft's the other way. He's going inland."

Ania had turned her head. Not towards the door. Towards the north-west wall of the hall, the way she had turned at Gran's on the night of the last car. She stood listening to something none of us could hear.

"He is going to the moor," she said. "To Hound Tor."

"Why?" I said. "In God's name, why the moor?"

"Because that is where the dragon breathes," said Ania. "The third place. He thinks he can finish it there." She was quiet for a moment. "And because they are going there too. All of them. I can hear them. They are moving north. Fast."

Holmes stood up from the Curator's chair. He put the claw back into the cardboard box, and the iron foot, and the skins, and the line, and closed the lid, and handed the box to Constable Bartlett, who took it without a word, as if he had been waiting all his life for somebody to hand him something that mattered.

"Constable," said Holmes, "you will take this to the police station at Newton Abbot, tonight, and put it into the hands of the Superintendent there, and nobody else, and you will tell him that Mr Sherlock Holmes will call on him tomorrow. Can you do that?"

Bartlett said he could.

"Mr Harvey," said Holmes. "How fast can you get us a trap and a good horse at this hour?"

Edward was already moving.

> *Fri. 27 Mar. 10.40 p.m. Museum. C. EDEN. Bagh nakh (tiger claw, 4 blades). Iron foot on a pole (5½ in.). Two museum wolf skins, struck off by Eden as Curator. Horsehair line: shutter bar. Howl down the speaking tube. Lang paid £5 to shut in the dog. Eden took W. Coysh off the last car at Corbyn Head; kept him in the ice house. Watchman broke the locker. Insp. R. came with three men. S.H.: Lang's statement names Insp. R. Bartlett would not take me. Eden walked out. Nobody stopped him. "I am the hand. You have not found the arm." Gone inland, to the moor. Ania: Hound Tor. The wolves going there too.*

CHAPTER 20 – Hound Tor at Dawn

Saturday, 28th March 1896. 5.40 a.m. Hound Tor, Dartmoor. S.H., E.H., Ania, self. Hard frost. Mist in the valleys. Sunrise 5.58.

Edward got us a trap from the yard behind the Torbay Inn, and a big raw-boned grey that belonged to the landlord's brother and had pulled the brewer's dray for six years and was afraid of nothing. Edward drove. He had been a porter and a conductor and never a carter, but he had been round horses all his life, and he took the reins as if he had been born with them, and we went out of Torquay at a quarter past eleven at a pace that frightened me.

We went by Newton Abbot, through the dark empty town with its shutters up, and out along the Bovey road, and then up. Up and up, through lanes so deep between their banks that the hedges met over our heads, past farms with no lights, past a church tower black against the stars. After Bovey the lanes got steeper and the hedges fell away, and there were stone walls instead, and then not even walls, and the trap came up out of the last of the trees onto the open moor, and the cold hit us like a door slammed in the face.

I had grown up on the edge of Dartmoor. I had never been up on it at night. Nobody went up on it at night who did not have to. The road was a pale line over the dark, and on

either side of it the moor went away and away into nothing, and above it there were more stars than I had ever seen, and below us, behind us, very far off, the lights of Torbay lay along the edge of the black sea like a string of beads that somebody had dropped.

The frost was coming down hard. The grey's breath went up in clouds. So did Edward's, on the box, and mine, and Holmes's, beside me, a long pale plume going back over his shoulder in the starlight, the way it had on the night we crossed Station Square in November.

Ania sat opposite me in the trap, with her hands in her lap and her face turned north, towards the tors. Her breath did not show. Not at all. Not in that cold.

I saw it. I am not proud that I saw it, at such a time, with everything that was happening. But I was a policeman, and I saw it, and I remembered the night in Station Square, and I thought: still. Even now. Even after all this.

* * *

She told us where to go. All the way up from Bovey, she told Edward when to turn, at forks in the road we could not see until we were on them. Left here. Straight on. Right, by the stone. She did not hesitate once. Twice she said, "They are ahead of us," and once, past Haytor, with the great black rocks of the tor going by on our left against the stars, she said,

"They are all round us now," very low, and Edward's hands jerked on the reins, and the grey threw up its head and blew.

We heard them twice on that road. Not the long cry from out over the sea that we had heard all winter in Paignton. Closer. Short calls, back and forth, from one side of the road and then the other, out on the dark moor, as if they were running alongside us and talking to each other as they ran. The grey went faster. Nobody touched the whip.

No farm dog barked. There were no farms, by then. But I do not think one would have.

At a little after five, with the first grey coming into the sky behind us over the sea, we came over a rise and Ania said, "There," and Edward pulled up.

In front of us, on a long slope of moor going up to the sky, stood Hound Tor.

I have been back there since, in daylight, in summer, with my grandchildren, and eaten bread and cheese in the sun on the grass below it, and it is only a heap of grey rocks on a hill. Great stacks of granite, piled and split and weathered into towers and pinnacles, with gaps between them you can walk through, like the streets of a ruined town. Children play hide and seek in it. People say it gave the Baskervilles their name.

In that light, before dawn, with the frost on it and the mist lying in the hollows below, it did not look like rocks. It looked like a crowd of great grey beasts, crouching on the top of the hill, with their backs to us, waiting.

Below the tor, at the foot of the slope, where a track came up from the valley, stood a carriage. A good closed carriage, black, with the lamps out. Its two horses were standing with their heads down and the steam going off them in the cold, and their flanks were white with dried lather. Nobody was with them.

On the door panel, very small, was a crest. I could not make it out in that light. I have always wished I had.

"He's up there," said Edward.

"Yes," said Holmes. He got down from the trap. His face, in the grey light, was the colour of the frost. "Mr Harvey, stay with the horses. No, listen to me. If anything comes down that hill that is not one of us, you will turn this trap round and drive to Bovey as fast as that horse will go, and you will not stop, whatever you hear. Do you understand me?"

Edward looked at him. Then he looked at Ania. Then he said, "No, Maister. I'm coming."

And Holmes, who had given orders to Scotland Yard and been obeyed, looked at a sacked tram conductor on a moorland road at five in the morning, and did not argue.

We tied the grey to the carriage wheel and went up the hill, the four of us, through the frosted heather, towards the rocks.

* * *

It was further than it looked. Everything on Dartmoor is. The heather was stiff with frost and crackled under our boots, and the slope was steeper than it seemed, and the air was so cold that it hurt to breathe it, and by the time we came up under the first of the great rocks I was blowing like the grey.

The light was coming. Behind us, over the sea, the sky had gone from black to grey to a thin cold green, and the stars were going out one by one. Below us, all down the valleys, the mist lay white and still, like milk in a bowl. The tops of the other tors stood up out of it like islands. There was no wind at all. There was no sound. Not a bird, not a sheep, not a stream.

Then we came between the first two stacks of rock, into the open space in the middle of the tor, the place like a ruined street, and there was Charles Eden.

He was standing at the far side, by a great split boulder, at the edge of a hollow in the ground among the rocks, a dark round dip in the granite, with the frost lying white all round its rim and none at all inside it. That was the hollow Holmes had seen in October. The third place, in Ania's broadside, where the dragon breathed.

He had his back to us. He was still in his evening clothes, under a long dark overcoat, with no hat, and his fair hair silvered with frost. He had something in his hand, at his lips. Something small and pale.

He heard us on the rock and turned round, quite slowly, and took the thing away from his mouth. It was a whistle. Not

a policeman's whistle, nor a shepherd's. A thin pale whistle, the length of a man's finger, carved, very old, yellow as old ivory. Bone, I thought. I still think so.

"Mr Holmes," said Charles Eden. "I did wonder whether you would come. You are very tiresome." He looked past Holmes at the rest of us, and smiled his pleasant smile. "And you have brought the furniture."

Holmes said, "It is over, Mr Eden. Come down with us."

"Over?" said Eden. "Oh, no. I don't think so." He looked down at the bone whistle in his gloved hand, and turned it over, lovingly, the way a collector turns over a thing he is proud of. "Do you know, they told me this would not work? That it was a curiosity, a superstition. An old Mongol thing, for calling the grey dogs of the steppe. I bought it in Peking twenty years ago from a man who swore it had belonged to a khan. And then this winter I came out on a cold night on the foreshore with poor Venning and his instruments, and blew it, for a joke. And they came." He smiled. "Not to me. Never quite to me. But they came. Every time."

He put it back to his lips.

"You came after me onto the moor, Mr Holmes," he said, round the whistle. "At dawn. With a policeman who is not a policeman, and a tram conductor who is not a conductor, and a girl who is not—whatever she is not. How very careless of you."

And he blew.

I heard nothing.

That is the first thing I want to set down. He put the bone whistle to his lips and blew, hard, so that his cheeks hollowed, and I heard nothing at all. Not a note. Not a breath through it. Only the silence of the moor, going on.

Then, from somewhere far down in the mist below the tor, to the north, there came an answer.

One voice. Long, rising. Then another, from the west. Then another, from behind us, down the slope we had just climbed, where Edward's grey was tied to the carriage wheel. Then another. Then more than I could count, from all round the hill, out of the white mist that lay in every valley, rising and falling and crossing each other, not in a chorus now but in a ring. A ring of voices, all round Hound Tor, closing in.

The hair stood up on my arms under my coat. I have never been so cold in my life.

And at the edge of the mist, where it lay along the foot of the slope below the rocks, something moved.

I will tell exactly what I saw, because I have been asked about it more often than about anything else in my life, and I have never once told it differently. I saw grey. Grey moving in grey. Long low shapes at the very edge of the mist, going along it, in and out of it, the way a fish moves at the edge of the light in deep water. I could not tell how many. I could not tell how big. Every time I fixed my eye on one, it was gone into the white, and another was there, a little further on. Once, low

down, close to the ground, I saw two points of pale light, side by side, steady, looking up the hill at us. Then they went out, as Miss Pinsent's lamps had gone out on the lawn at Torre Abbey.

That is all. That is all I ever saw of them, in all that winter, and all my life. I have never claimed more.

Edward had stopped dead beside me with his mouth open. Holmes had moved without my seeing him move, and was standing between Eden and the three of us, with his bandaged hand held against his chest and his good hand empty at his side, and his face set like the granite. And the voices went on, closer, and closer, round the hill.

Eden lowered the whistle. He was smiling. He looked, in that grey light, with the frost in his hair and the howling all round him, like a man in the front row at a concert.

"There," he said softly. "You see?"

And then Ania walked past Holmes.

She did not hurry. She walked across the open ground in the middle of the tor, between the rocks, in her grey costume, with her hands at her sides, the way she had walked through the crowd on the Haldon Pier. She went past Eden, close enough to touch him, as if he had not been there. She went to the very rim of the hollow in the rock, where the frost stopped, and stood at the edge of it, looking down into it. Then she lifted her head and looked out over the moor, at the mist, and the shapes moving at the edge of it.

The sun came up.

It came up behind us, out of the sea, very fast, the way it does on the moor in spring. One moment the whole world was grey. The next, a long level blade of gold came across from the east and struck the tops of the rocks, and the frost on them lit up like broken glass, and the mist below turned from white to rose.

And the light fell on Ania's face, as she stood at the edge of the hollow, and I saw her breathe.

I saw her breath go out of her into the cold air. A small pale cloud, from her lips. It hung in the gold light for a moment, and drifted, and was gone. And then another. And another. Slow and even, like anybody's. Like mine. Like Edward's beside me, and Holmes's, and Eden's.

In four months, I had never once seen it. Not on the night in Station Square. Not on the moor road three hours before, in the trap, in the bitter frost, when all the rest of us were breathing out like engines. I had looked. I had looked every time.

She had learned to do it.

I do not know when. I do not know how. I know only that at the moment the sun came up on Hound Tor, standing at the edge of the place where the dragon breathed, with the wolves all round us in the mist, Ania breathed out into the cold like a living woman. And I do not know whether she did

it for them, or for us, or for herself, or for no reason at all except that she had finally found out how.

The howling stopped.

Not died away. Stopped. All at once, all round the hill, every voice at the same moment, as if a door had been shut on it. And in the silence afterwards, which was the greatest silence I have ever heard, the shapes at the edge of the mist were not there any more. The mist lay rose-coloured and empty in the valleys, all round, as far as I could see.

They had gone quiet near her. Edward had said it once, at Gran's, as a joke. *Even the dogs mind her*.

* * *

Charles Eden was looking at her. Not at the moor. At her.

The smile had gone off his face. All of it, all at once, the way the howling had gone. He was looking at the small pale cloud of her breath in the sunlight, and at her face, and his own face was grey-white and stiff, like a man who has opened a door in a house he thought he knew and found a room he has never seen.

He put the whistle to his mouth again and blew. Hard. Again. Nothing answered. Nothing moved. The moor lay silent and golden in the sun.

"What are you?" he said. His voice had gone high and thin. "In God's name. What *are* you?"

Ania turned her head and looked at him. She did not answer.

Then Charles Eden ran.

He went over the rocks on the far side of the tor, westward, away from us, the way a hare goes when the dogs are on it, without looking back. Holmes shouted, "Hills!", and I was after him before I knew it, over the granite, slipping on the frost, with Edward behind me. But the far side of Hound Tor goes down very steep, among great tumbled boulders, into a long valley full of mist, and by the time I got to the top of it he was already halfway down, a dark figure going down and down into the white, and then the mist took him.

I went down after him into it. It was like walking into wet wool. I could not see my own hand. I could hear him somewhere below me, crashing through bracken, and then I could not. And then, from further down, from the floor of the valley where the old track runs from Manaton, I heard a horse whinny, and a man's voice, low and sharp, not Eden's, and the sound of a carriage door, and wheels. Going away fast. Eastward. Towards the road, and the edge of the moor, and Torbay.

Somebody had been waiting for him. On the other side of the hill. Somebody who had known exactly where he would come down.

I stood in the mist in the bottom of that valley with my heart going like a drum and listened to the wheels go away until I could not hear them. Then I climbed back up.

* * *

Holmes was standing where I had left him. He had not moved. He was looking at Ania, who was still at the rim of the hollow, with the sun on her face, breathing.

"Gone," I said. "There was a carriage. Down on the Manaton track. Someone was waiting."

"Yes," said Holmes. "I expect so."

"We can still—the road, if Ted takes the trap—"

"No." He turned his head and looked at me. He looked very tired, and very old, older than I had ever seen him, and the bandage on his hand had come loose and was trailing in the frost. "Let him go, Hills. He does not know it yet, but he is a dead man. He has failed them. He has been found out, by people he despised, and he has run, and he has shown them his face on Dartmoor at sunrise, frightened. Men like the ones he works for do not keep frightened men." He looked eastward, towards the sea. "Whoever waited for him on the Manaton track was not there to rescue him."

Edward had come up beside us. He was looking at Ania too.

"She all right?" he said. "Ania. You all right, my bird?"

Ania turned round. The sun was full on her now, and she was breathing out small pale clouds into the morning, and looking down at them, at her own breath going out of her and drifting away in the gold light, with an expression I had never seen on her face. Wonder, I think. Like a child that has blown its first soap bubble.

"Yes," she said. "I am all right, Edward. It is very cold."

Edward laughed, shakily, and took off his muffler and put it round her neck, and she let him. He did not notice anything. He never did notice. I think he was the only one of us she never had to learn to be anything for.

I noticed. I have never stopped noticing.

Before we went down, I walked once round the outside of the tor, in the new sun, looking at the frost. And I found them. All round the hill, in the white frost on the heather and the short grass, there were tracks. Big ones, four-toed, with the claws showing. Not one foot pressed down over and over, like the iron foot on its pole. Fore feet and hind feet, large and small, deep and shallow, crossing and recrossing, wandering, the way living animals walk. Dozens of them.

They came up out of the mist on every side. They circled the tor. And then every set of them, every single one, went in among the rocks to the rim of the hollow where Ania had stood, where the frost stopped, and down into it.

And did not come out.

I measured them. I wrote them down. I have the page.

Sat. 28 Mar. 7.10 a.m. Hound Tor. C. Eden with a bone whistle ("Mongol, from Peking"). Blew it; I heard nothing; they answered, all round. I SAW THEM: grey in the mist, never clear. Two eyes. Ania walked to the hollow. Sun came up. HER BREATH SHOWED. First time. The howling stopped. Eden blew again; nothing. "What are you?" Ran west into the mist. Carriage waiting on the Manaton track; another man's voice. Gone east. S.H.: "He is a dead man." Tracks in the frost, real, many: all round the tor, into the hollow. None out.

CHAPTER 21 – Daddyhole Plain

Saturday, 28th March 1896. 3 p.m. Newton Abbot police station. S.H. with Supt. Gidley. Warrant sworn for the arrest of Charles Eden, J.P., of Ravenscroft, Babbacombe, on three counts of wilful murder.

We came down off the moor at about nine in the morning, and Edward drove the grey back the way we had come, at a walk, because the poor beast was done. Nobody talked much. Ania sat in the trap with Edward's muffler round her neck, breathing out little clouds into the sun, and looking at them. Holmes sat beside her with his eyes shut. I do not think he was asleep.

At Newton Abbot he got down, and told us to go home and sleep, and went into the police station there with his loose bandage trailing. Constable Bartlett had been as good as his word. He had driven through the night with the cardboard box on his knees and put it into the hands of the Newton Abbot superintendent, a dour, grey, careful man called Gidley who had never once dined at Ravenscroft or anywhere else in Torquay, and who did not like Torquay men, and liked Torquay policemen less. Holmes was in his office for four hours.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, Superintendent Gidley swore a warrant before a Newton Abbot magistrate for the

arrest of Charles Eden, Justice of the Peace, on three counts of wilful murder. Peter Venning. Henry Mudge. Matthew Brimacombe. The fourth, William Coysh, would be added, Gidley said, when the doctor had done.

At five o'clock, Gidley's men went to Ravenscroft, without telling Torquay they were coming. They opened the ice house in the woods, and found under the sawdust a toolbox with nothing in it but black stains, and a man's sleeve, of good brown cloth, stiff and dark, that had been torn off at the shoulder. Peter Venning's sleeve, from his covert coat, that I had never found on Paignton sands. They found in the boathouse below the house a dinghy with dark stains in the bilge that had been scrubbed and had not come out. They found in the gallery of Indian curiosities an empty glass case with a velvet lining, the shape of a tiger's claw pressed into it.

They did not find Charles Eden. His servants had not seen him since he drove out on Friday evening to meet Mr Endacott at the museum. His carriage had not come home.

I heard all this on the Saturday night, from Holmes, at Bailey's, where he had come straight from Newton Abbot. I was so tired I could hardly sit up. I went home to Princes Street, and lay down on the bed in my clothes, and slept as I had not slept since November.

* * *

Sunday, 29th March 1896. 5.10 a.m. Princes Street. Ania at the back door.

She did not knock. I woke, and she was there, standing in my kitchen in the grey light, with Edward's muffler still round her neck. I had not heard the door. I have never known how she got in.

"Daddyhole," she said. "Now."

I asked her nothing. I had learned that much. I pulled on my boots and my coat, and we went out together into the empty streets.

It is three miles and more from Paignton to Daddyhole Plain, round by Torquay harbour and up the hill on the far side towards Meadfoot. We did not go by the sea road. Ania went by the lanes above it, through Preston and Chelston, walking very fast without seeming to hurry, and I went beside her, half running. It was a soft, grey morning, no frost, with a low sky and a little wind off the sea. The town was asleep. It was Sunday. Somewhere a church bell was ringing for an early service, very faint.

She did not speak until we were over the top of the hill beyond the harbour, on the road along the cliff. Then she said, without turning her head:

"Edward is coming. And Maister. I sent Sam."

I asked her when.

"At four," she said. "When I heard them."

I did not ask her what she had heard. I did not need to.

* * *

I should say what Daddyhole Plain is, for those who have never been there.

It lies above the sea on the eastern side of Torquay, between the harbour and Meadfoot sands, a wide flat stretch of rough grass on the top of the cliff, open to the wind, with a few stunted trees bent all one way, and a footpath going along the edge. On the seaward side, the cliff does not go straight down to the water as it does elsewhere along that coast. Long ago, nobody knows when, a great piece of it fell away, and left behind it an enormous ragged chasm in the hillside, a bowl of broken rock and earth and brambles and ivy dropping two hundred feet to the sea, with the waves working at the bottom of it. The old people called it Daddy's Hole, and Daddy, in old Devon speech, is the Devil, and they said it was the place where the Devil had come up out of the ground, or gone down into it. Nobody went there at night. Nobody had needed our broadside to tell them that.

There was a coastguard lookout at the edge of the plain in those days, a small whitewashed hut with a flagstaff, and a cottage behind it. When Ania and I came out onto the plain, at about ten past six, there was a coastguard standing outside the hut in his blue jersey with a telescope under his arm, quite still, staring at something on the grass near the edge of the chasm. He had been standing like that, he told me afterwards, for nearly a quarter of an hour. He had come out at six to go

along the cliff to Meadfoot on his morning round, and seen it, and had not been able to make himself go any closer, and had not been able to make himself go back inside.

He saw us, and his face changed with relief, and then changed again when he saw that I was not in uniform.

"I'm police," I said. It was the first lie I had told in that whole business, and I am still not sorry for it.

He pointed. He did not say anything. He did not need to.

I went across the wet grass towards the edge of Daddy's Hole. Ania came beside me.

Charles Eden lay on his back on the wet grass, a few yards from the lip of the chasm, with his face turned towards the sea.

He was still in his evening clothes, under the long dark overcoat he had worn on Hound Tor. His fair hair was dark with the night's damp. His boots were side by side, very neat, toes up. His hands were at his sides, and both of them were clenched, and both of them were full of earth and torn grass, as though at the end he had tried to hold on to the cliff.

His throat had been torn out.

I had seen it three times before that winter, and I had thought there was nothing left in it that could reach me. I was wrong. Because I had seen it done three times by Charles Eden, with an iron claw from a glass case, and laid out by Charles Eden for an audience, and I knew now exactly how. And I knew, standing over him on Daddyhole Plain in the grey

Sunday morning, that this had not been done with any claw. The claw was in a cardboard box in Newton Abbot police station, under lock and key, and Superintendent Gidley had the key in his waistcoat pocket.

And this was not neat. The wounds were not in sets of four, the same distance apart. They were everywhere. They were ragged and deep and wide, and there were a great many of them, on his hands and his arms and his face, and the long dark coat was in ribbons, and the grass all round him for yards was flattened and torn and dark with blood. A great deal of blood. Not like Paignton sands at all.

He had been killed where he lay. And he had fought.

I made myself look at his face. I wish I had not. Whatever Charles Eden had seen, in the last moments, on the edge of the Devil's chasm in the dark, he had still been seeing it when he died.

* * *

I wrote. I knelt on the wet grass and took out the pocketbook and wrote, the way I had on Paignton sands, the way I had in the depot yard, because it was the only thing I knew how to do. And as I wrote, I began to see the ground.

There were tracks. All round him, in the soft wet turf, trodden in and over each other, so many that the grass was churned to mud. Big four-toed prints, with the claws showing. Not one iron foot pressed down over and over. Fore and hind,

large and small, deep and shallow, crossing and recrossing, the way they had been round Hound Tor in the frost. Living animals. Many. They had come across the plain from the west, from the direction of the road. They had gone round him. And then, all together, they had gone away to the edge of the chasm, and over it, down into Daddy's Hole, among the brambles and the broken rock, where no man could follow and the sea worked at the bottom.

There was nothing else in his hands but earth. I looked. I looked in his pockets, which I had no right to do, and in the grass round him, and along the edge of the hole as far as I dared. His watch was there, and his purse, and his cigar case, and his card case with *C. Eden, Ravenscroft* engraved on it in a gentleman's copperplate. The bone whistle was not.

And then Ania, who had not come close, and had not looked at him once, but had stood a little apart on the grass all this while with her face turned to the sea, said: "Mr Hills. There."

She was pointing at the ground, a few feet from Eden's head, on the side away from the chasm.

There was a mark cut into the turf. Not chalked, not scratched. Cut, with a sharp knife, deep, so that the green sods had been lifted out in strips and laid aside, and the shape stood out in the black earth underneath, as long as a man was tall. The flat head. The close-set eyes. The tusks. The long tail,

coiled all the way round, and back, to cut across its own beginning.

No word under it, this time. It did not need one.

And beside the mark, in the soft earth where the turf had been lifted out, there were the prints of a man's boots.

One man. Good boots, narrow, with a low heel, a gentleman's boots. They came across the plain from the road, from the west, the same way as the other tracks. They came to this spot. And here they stood. I could see it as plainly as if I had been there. Here they had stood still, side by side, for a long time, while the turf was lifted and the mark was cut and the other tracks went round and round in the dark a few yards off. The heels had sunk deep into the wet, the way heels do when a man stands still and waits. And then they had turned, quite unhurried, and walked away again, the way they had come, towards the road.

They had not gone near Eden. Not within three yards. They had not needed to.

I sat back on my heels on the grass with the pocketbook in my hand and looked at those two deep heel marks for a long time.

* * *

Holmes came at twenty to seven, with Edward, on foot, up the hill from the harbour. Edward saw Eden from fifty yards off, and stopped, and stood. Then he came on, slowly, and looked

down at the man who had killed Will Coysh and Harry Mudge, and put his tram-man's hands in his pockets, and did not say anything at all for a long time.

"I thought I'd be glad," he said at last. "All winter, I thought, if I ever saw him dead, I'd be glad." He looked at Eden's face, and away. "I ent glad, Jack."

I said I knew.

Holmes did not look at the body for long. He looked at the tracks, and followed them to the edge of the hole, and stood there looking down into it for some time. Then he came back and looked at the mark cut in the turf, and at the boot prints beside it, and knelt and laid his good hand flat in one of the heel marks, and stayed so, quite still, with his eyes closed, the way I had seen Ania lay her fingers in the claw marks on the last car.

"He stood here," said Holmes, very quietly, "and blew Eden's whistle, and watched." He opened his eyes. "He did not need to touch him. He did not need a claw. He only needed the thing that Eden had found and could not keep. They took it from him on the Manaton road, and brought him here, to the Devil's Hole, and let him go, and told him to run. And then they called."

"Who?" said Edward. "Who, Maister?"

Holmes stood up. He looked at the boot prints going away towards the road.

"The arm," he said. "Eden told us. *I am the hand*. The arm has closed its hand, Mr Harvey. That is all. And the hand could have hanged a great many people, and now it never will."

Ania had gone to the edge of the chasm. She was standing at the very lip of it, where the turf ended and the broken rock began, looking down into Daddy's Hole, at the sea working white at the bottom, two hundred feet below.

"They are gone," she said. "Out. Into the water." She was silent for a moment. "Going south. Round Berry Head."

I asked her whether they would come back.

She turned round and looked at me. Her breath went out of her in a small pale cloud into the grey morning, the way it had on Hound Tor.

"Yes," she said. "Not soon. But yes."

* * *

Inspector Robinson came at half past seven, with two Torquay constables and Dr Hext, in a cab. He got down at the edge of the plain and walked across the grass to where Eden lay, and stood over him.

I was watching his face. I had been watching it all winter. I had seen it kind, and amused, and easy, and warm, and on the steps of the court smiling for the newspaper men. I had seen it surprised, once, in the museum. I had never seen it as it was then.

He was afraid.

Not shocked. Not sorry. Afraid, the way a man is afraid when he sees, laid out on the grass in front of him, exactly what will happen to him if he is ever any trouble to anybody. He stood there with the colour gone out of him, looking at Charles Eden, who had dined with him and given him money to carry and called him Thomas. And then his eyes went to the mark cut in the turf. And then, slowly, to the two deep heel marks beside it.

He looked at them for a long time.

Dr Hext had gone down on his knees by the body, grunting, with his bag. After a minute he sat back on his heels, as I had, and took off his spectacles, and polished them on his handkerchief.

"Teeth," he said. To nobody in particular. "These were made by teeth. I'll say it at the inquest, Robinson, and I'll say it in the newspapers if they ask me, and I don't care who it frightens. Not dogs. Not a madman. Not some contraption from a museum. Teeth." He put his spectacles back on. "I'm sixty-eight years old. I said *I cannot say with certainty* in November, and three more men are dead. I'll not say it again."

Robinson did not answer him. He did not say *dogs*. He did not say anything at all. He turned away from the body, and looked out to sea, south, towards Berry Head, where the sky was beginning to break up and let the light through. And then, very slowly, he turned his head and looked at me.

There was no warmth in it. There was no threat in it either. There was only the look of one man to another, both of them standing on the same cliff edge, both of them knowing it.

Then he looked past me, at Holmes, standing by the cut turf with his bandaged hand. And at Ania, at the lip of Daddy's Hole, breathing.

He turned round and walked back across the plain to his cab without a word, and got in, and drove away.

> *Sun. 29 Mar. 9 a.m. Daddyhole Plain. C. EDEN, dead. Throat torn. Killed where he lay; fought. Not the claw (at Newton Abbot, locked). Real tracks, many, round him; over the edge into the Hole. Watch, purse, cards left. BONE WHISTLE GONE. Taowu cut in the turf beside him, no word. One man's boots: gentleman's, narrow, low heel. Came from the road; stood still a long time by the mark; went back to the road. S.H.: "The arm has closed its hand." Ania: "Gone. Into the water. South. They will come back. Not soon." Dr Hext: "Teeth." Insp. R. saw the heel marks. He was afraid. He said nothing.*

CHAPTER 22 – Robinson

Thursday, 2nd April 1896. Inquest on C. Eden, Torquay. Verdict: death from injuries inflicted by animals unknown. Dr Hext: "Teeth." The jury out four minutes.

The town found out about Charles Eden in the first week of April, and it took the news the way a man takes a blow he has not seen coming. It did not believe it, and then it believed it all at once, and then it could not stop talking about it.

It came out a piece at a time. Superintendent Gidley at Newton Abbot was not a man for newspapers, but he was a man who did things properly, and doing things properly meant inquests reopened, and evidence given, and evidence given meant the *Directory* had a man in the room. The tiger's claw from India. The iron foot on its pole. The wolf skins from the museum stores, struck off the register by the Honorary Curator himself. The sleeve in the ice house. The stains in the dinghy. One by one they were held up in the long room of the hotel on the front where they had held the inquest on Peter Venning in November and found *dogs*. And one by one the jurymen, who had most of them shaken Charles Eden's hand at one time or another, sat and looked at them and went grey.

The coroner's juries found, on Peter Venning, Henry Mudge, Matthew Brimacombe and William Coysh, wilful murder by Charles Eden, since deceased. On Charles Eden

himself, they found that he had died of injuries inflicted by animals unknown, at Daddyhole Plain, on the night of the twenty-eighth of March. Dr Hext said *teeth*, loudly, three times, and nobody contradicted him. The coroner thanked him for his evidence and did not ask what animals. Nobody wanted to know.

The *Directory* printed it all, under headlines that got bigger every week. THE TORBAY MURDERS: A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE. THE SECRET OF RAVENSCROFT. THE CURATOR'S CLAW. People who had been afraid of the dragon for four months were now afraid of their neighbours, which is a great deal more comfortable, because you can see your neighbours. The Longpei rhyme went out of the streets in a fortnight. The children found something else to skip to. I have never in my life been so glad to hear a skipping rhyme stop.

Nobody wrote to the *Directory* to say they were sorry about RAGE. But the boy on the sea wall at Preston who had thrown a stone at me came up to me outside the Board School one afternoon in April, very red, and said, "Sorry, mister," and ran off before I could answer. And that, from Torbay, was a great deal.

* * *

And behind Charles Eden, there was nothing at all.

That was what Holmes had known on Daddyhole Plain, kneeling with his hand in the heel mark of a man's boot. Every line that went back from Eden ended in Eden.

Mr Endacott of Union Street was examined by Superintendent Gidley for two days. He was a small, dry, bald man with a cold in his head, and he answered every question with perfect politeness and perfect frankness, and produced every paper he was asked for. The Bay Estates Company had one beneficial owner, and his name was Charles Eden. Endacott had acted on Mr Eden's written instructions throughout, in every purchase and every commission, and had his letters to prove it, in Mr Eden's own hand, every one. Fourteen properties on the foreshore. Two old wolf skins sent to Torwood Street. The commission to Mr Venning. The shares in the Tramways. All Eden's. All in his hand. All in order.

The Company's bank account at Exeter had been opened by Eden, in his own name, with his own money, out of his father's sugar fortune. Every pound that had gone through it had been his.

"It's too neat," Edward said, at Gran's, when I told him. Gran's was open again; the magistrates had found, on reflection, that the summons against Mrs Luscombe had been improperly served, and returned her barrel, which had been in the cells at Torquay for a fortnight and was, she complained by signs, much the worse for it. "It's too neat,

Jack. Like that paw under Ward's stairs. Somebody's made it neat."

He was right. I think everyone knew he was right, even Gidley, who was nobody's fool. But you cannot hang a man for being too neat. And you cannot find a man who was never written down.

As for the tramway along the sea front, it was quietly dropped. The Council rescinded its permission at the May meeting, with Councillor Brimacombe's empty chair draped in black. The fourteen properties went to Eden's heir, a cousin in Bristol, who put them all up for auction in the summer. They sold well. Most of them went to buyers from London, through a firm of solicitors in Lincoln's Inn, acting for clients.

I wrote that down. I wrote down the name of the firm. I have it still.

* * *

And then Lang's statement went.

I have set down that Holmes told Robinson in the museum that there were three copies. One with the magistrates at Newton Abbot, sworn and signed. One with a solicitor in Exeter. One in London.

On the Tuesday after Daddyhole, the magistrates' clerk at Newton Abbot, a Mr Furze, went to the strong cupboard in his office to take out Lang's sworn statement for Superintendent Gidley, and found it was not there. Nothing else was missing.

The cupboard had not been forced. Mr Furze had the only key, and it had been on his watch chain all week. He was very upset. He searched the office for two days. On the Friday he did not come to work, and on the Saturday his landlady said he had paid his rent to the end of the quarter and gone, with his wife and his two boxes, by the early train. Somebody said Liverpool. Somebody said a ship for Canada. He was never seen in Devon again.

On the Wednesday night, the offices of the Exeter solicitor were broken into. A window in the yard was forced and the clerk's desk turned over and a cash box taken, with eleven pounds in it. Nothing else was touched, except one deed box, which held one paper. When the solicitor opened it on Thursday morning, it was empty.

And Lang himself was gone. He had left Hesketh Lodge on the day after the museum, telling Mrs Brimacombe, who was home from Bath in her widow's black and had not the heart to keep a butler anyway, that he had a position offered in London. Nobody knew where in London. On the tenth of April, Superintendent Gidley received a letter, posted at Southampton, in Lang's hand. It said that the writer had been confused and frightened on the day he spoke to the gentleman in the Torbay Inn, and on the day he went before the magistrates, and that he had said things he did not mean and could not swear to. He had been paid by Mr Eden himself, he

now remembered, and by no one else. He was very sorry for the trouble he had caused. He was going abroad for his health.

That was all. Holmes read the letter in Gidley's office and handed it back without a word.

I asked him that night, at Bailey's, about the third copy. The one in London.

He looked at the fire for a long time.

"There was no copy in London, Hills," he said at last. "I told Robinson there was, in the museum, because I needed him to believe it, that night, for long enough to let Bartlett carry the box out of that hall. It was a lie. A good one. It did what it was meant to do." He was quiet a moment. "I had not the time to make a third. I was in Newton Abbot at five o'clock and in the museum at nine. I am sorry."

I said it did not matter. I said it was not his fault.

"No," said Holmes. "But it is my lie. And I have been thinking, this winter, a good deal about lies, and whose they are when they are done."

* * *

Monday, 13th April 1896. 10 a.m. Paignton police station. Sent for by Insp. Robinson.

He sent for me on the Monday after Easter. A note, in his own hand, delivered to Princes Street by a constable who would not meet my eye. *Inspector Robinson would be obliged if*

Constable Hills would call at the station at ten o'clock. Obliged. Constable. Not suspended constable. Not Hills. Constable Hills.

I went in uniform. I had not worn it since the day I walked home from Torquay. Mary brushed it for me in the kitchen, very hard, without saying anything, and put my helmet into my hands at the door, and kissed me, which she did not usually do in the street.

The sergeant at the desk, who had taken his hand off my chair in March as if it had burned him, stood up when I came in. He did not say anything either. He nodded me up the stairs.

Robinson was at his desk. He looked up when I came in, and smiled, the old smile, warm and easy, and told me to shut the door and sit down, and offered me a cigarette from the silver case.

I shut the door. I did not sit down. I did not take the cigarette.

He noticed. He put the case away without remark.

"Well, Jack," he said. "You've had a winter."

I said I had, sir.

He opened a drawer in his desk and took out a small flat leather case, and laid it on the blotter between us, and pushed it across with one finger, the way Mr Purvis had pushed two sovereigns across the table at Bailey's in November.

It was my warrant card.

"The inquiry into your conduct is closed," he said. "No case to answer. The Superintendent has seen fit to take the view that a constable who had reason to believe a serious crime was going unpunished, and acted on that belief, out of hours, at some risk to himself, is not a constable who ought to be disciplined." He smiled a little. "Superintendent Gidley at Newton Abbot was very forcible on the point, I'm told. And the Watch Committee has asked me to convey to you its thanks for your part in bringing the late Mr Eden's crimes to light. There'll be a paragraph in the *Directory* on Saturday. And I think, Jack, when the sergeant's vacancy comes up at Brixham in the autumn, there'll be no difficulty at all."

I looked at the warrant card on the blotter. I did not pick it up.

"And the waybill, sir?" I said.

He did not stop smiling. But his eyes, which had never quite been part of the smile, went quite flat.

"What waybill, Jack?"

So there it was. I had known it would be. I think I had come up those stairs only to hear him say it.

I said, "Harry Mudge, sir. Will Coysh. Venning. The Councillor. Billy Narracott's ponies. My children's gatepost."

Robinson looked at me across his desk for a long time. And then he did a thing I had never seen him do. He got up, and went to the window, and stood with his back to me,

looking out at the street, with his hands clasped behind him. When he spoke, his voice was different. Lower. Not easy at all.

"Do you know what I saw, on Daddyhole Plain?" he said. "Do you know what I saw, Jack? I saw Charlie Eden. I've known Charlie Eden for fifteen years. I've sat at his table. I've sailed in his boat. He was a clever man, and a charming man, and he was not afraid of anything on this earth, and I have never in my life seen anything as afraid as his face was, on that grass." He was quiet for a moment. "And I saw a pair of boots that had stood and watched. That's what I saw. That's all I saw."

I waited.

"You think I'm one of them," said Robinson, still to the window. "Don't you? Some great wicked conspiracy. And I'm in it. Sitting at their table." He laughed, very short. "I carried envelopes, Jack. Do you understand me? Now and then. For a man who dined in the right houses and was good to my wife. I carried envelopes, and I lost some papers off a file, and I said *dogs* when I was asked to say *dogs*. I never knew what was in the envelopes. I never asked. You don't ask, in this bay. Not if you want to get on. Not if you want to see your children grow up." He turned round. His face was white. "I never hurt anybody. I never laid a finger on a living soul."

I said, "Harry Mudge was tied to his own tram with his wife's muffler, sir."

He flinched. Just a little. Then the face closed up again, and he was Inspector Robinson, handsome and easy and well turned out, and the man at the window was gone as if he had never been there.

"Eden is dead," he said. "Eden did it. All of it. The juries have said so, and the coroner, and the *Directory*. It's finished, Jack. It's over." He sat down at his desk again. "Take your card. Take your stripes, in the autumn. Go home to your wife, and your children, and the new baby when it comes. And leave it there." He looked at me. "Because I'll tell you this for nothing, as one policeman to another. If you don't leave it there, the next mark on your door won't be chalk. And it won't be me that cuts it. And there won't be anything I can do to stop it." He picked up his pen. "That's all."

I stood there for a long moment.

Then I picked up my warrant card from his blotter, and put it in my tunic pocket, over my heart, next to the private pocketbook, and said, "Thank you, sir," and went out, and shut the door behind me.

I have thought about that interview more than about almost anything else in this account, and I have never been able to decide whether he was telling me the truth. That he only carried envelopes. That he never knew. That he was a weak man and a frightened one and not a wicked one. I think now that it does not matter very much, in the end, which he was. Weak men carry the envelopes. Wicked men write the

letters inside them. And the ones that do the harm are always the ones who never write anything down.

* * *

I told Holmes that night at Bailey's. All of it. I told him I had taken the card.

"Good," he said.

I said I did not feel good. I said I felt as if I had been bought.

"You have not been bought, Hills. You have been placed." He turned his glass on the table, the way he had on the winter night when he told me about the hound. "Robinson will be a superintendent in ten years. Perhaps a chief constable, somewhere, in twenty. He will carry a great many envelopes between now and then. And somebody in this bay will need to be standing near enough to see whose hand he takes them from." He looked at me. "You are an honest policeman. There are not many. Stay one. Stay in. Take the stripes. Write everything down."

"And him? Robinson? We just leave him?"

"We cannot touch him," said Holmes. "Not now. Not with Lang in a ship and Furze in Canada and the paper gone. If we try, we will lose, and he will know exactly what we have, and so will the man whose boots stood on Daddyhole Plain." He was quiet. "But he knows that we know. And he knows that

Rage has not gone away. And that, Hills, is a kind of chain round a man's neck, too. Let him wear it."

* * *

They took Edward back at the Tramways on the twentieth of April.

I had nothing to do with it, and nor had Holmes. It was Jim Coysh. He went round every man on the cars and in the shed and the generating station with a sheet of paper, in his own big round hand, and every man signed it, a hundred and twelve of them, and Amos Pengelly signed it first. And Jim took it into the manager's office himself and laid it on his desk. It said that the men of the Torquay Tramways would be glad to have Edward Harvey back on the cars, and that if the Company did not see fit to have him back, the men would be glad to talk to the Company about it, all of them together.

The Company, which had lost one director on Daddyhole Plain and was not anxious to be in the *Directory* again, saw fit.

Edward got his ticket punch back. Number forty-one. Holmes had given it to Gidley, and Gidley had given it to me, and I gave it to Edward at Gran's that night, and he held it in both hands for a long time without saying anything, with his thumb in the callus on the side of it.

* * *

And on the last Saturday in April, I went out to Brixham on the carrier's cart, and brought Mary and the children home.

Reuben and the other three brothers walked us to the end of the quay. Reuben shook my hand, and held on to it a moment, and said, "Any time, Jack," and I knew he meant it.

The window in the front room at Princes Street had been mended by then. I had done it myself, badly. The gatepost was the hard thing. You cannot mend a carving in a gatepost. You can only plane it out, and paint it over, and it shows. I planed it out three times before Mary would let the children past it, and it showed every time, a pale place in the wood under the new paint, the shape of a thing with tusks.

I left it in the end. Mary said, "Leave it, Jack. Let 'em see we're still here."

She was standing at the door with Annie by the hand and Thomas pulling at her skirts and the new baby beginning to show under her apron, looking at me over the gate in the spring evening.

"Is it finished?" she said.

I thought about the heel marks on Daddyhole Plain. About a firm of solicitors in Lincoln's Inn, buying land along the Torquay foreshore for clients. About a bone whistle that was not in a dead man's pocket. About something breathing, very deep, under Kents Cavern, and tracks in the frost on Hound Tor that went down into a hole in the granite and did not come out.

"Part of it," I said.

She looked at me a moment longer. Then she nodded, the way she had nodded at the kitchen table in February, and took the children in.

Mon. 13 Apr. Reinstated. Commendation. Sgt's stripes promised for Brixham, autumn. Insp. R.: "What waybill, Jack?" Says he only carried envelopes. Says he never knew. Says if I don't leave it there, the next mark won't be chalk. Lang's statement gone (Newton Abbot original: clerk Furze fled to Canada; Exeter copy: stolen). No London copy (S.H.: "my lie"). Lang's letter from Southampton: retracts. Insp. R. cannot be touched. He knows that we know. S.H.: "Stay in. Write everything down." Eden's 14 properties sold to London buyers, via a firm in Lincoln's Inn. Name of firm: this book, p. 140.

CHAPTER 23 – A Hand Behind the Hand

Friday, 8th May 1896. Gran's. 8 p.m. All four. Mrs L. Fine and warm. S.H.: "I leave on Sunday."

He told us on the Friday, at Gran's, with the window open for the first time that year, and the smell of the may blossom coming in from somebody's garden at the top of Winner Street, and the children skipping outside in the long light. Not to Longpei, any more. To something about a sailor and his sweetheart. I did not listen to the words. I only listened to the rope.

"I leave on Sunday," said Holmes.

Nobody said anything. We had all known it was coming. He had been in Torbay six weeks since the night of the two knocks, longer than he had stayed at any one time before, and in the last fortnight there had been nothing left for him to do. Gidley had his evidence. The inquests were done. Robinson was at his desk, smiling. The bay had gone back to being the bay, with the visitors coming in again for the season and the bathing machines out on the sands at Paignton and the cars running full until eleven at night. We had felt him going for days, the way you feel the tide turn before the water moves.

Edward said, "Back to London, Maister?"

Holmes looked at his hands on the table. The bandage was gone from the left one. It had been gone a week. There was no scar on it, not a mark, though I had seen it bound up tight on the night he came back, and blood on the binding.

"Not to London," he said. "Further on."

Edward did not ask what that meant. He had learned, too, by then.

* * *

I will set down the rest of that evening as it happened, because it was the last time the four of us were together in that room, and I have wanted all my life to remember it right.

He spoke to each of us. Not formally. Not like a man making a speech. He simply turned to each of us in turn, as the evening went on, and said what he had to say, and then went back to his pipe.

To Mrs Luscombe first, who could not hear a word of it. He got up and went to her chair by the range, and took her old knotted hand in both of his, and bowed over it, very low, the way I suppose he would have bowed to a duchess. Mrs Luscombe looked up at him, and patted his hand, and then got up and went to the cupboard and cut him a slice of ham, and put it on the plate at the end of the table, the place she had laid for him every night since Christmas. He sat down in front of it and ate it. All of it. I had never once seen him eat anything with pleasure, in six months. He ate that slice of

ham as if it were the best thing he had ever tasted. Perhaps it was.

To Edward, he said:

"Mr Harvey. You have a piece of paper. A tram waybill, from last October, with something written on the back of it in pencil."

Edward went red. He had never told Holmes he had kept it. He had never told anyone but me.

"Keep it," said Holmes. "Do not throw it away, ever. Put it somewhere safe, with your other papers. And when you have children, give it to them, and tell them to keep it. And tell them to give it to theirs." He was quiet for a moment. "One day, somebody in your family will read what is written on the back of it, and know exactly what it means. And they will know then that I was here, and that I sat in Bailey's with you, and that you told me about the wolves, and that I was wrong." He smiled, a little. "I should like somebody to know that I was wrong. It does a man good."

Edward could not say anything at all. He nodded. I think he went home that night and put the waybill in the family Bible, between the Old Testament and the New, where it stayed for a very long time. I know where it is now. I will come to that.

To me, he said nothing for a long time. He waited until late, until the children had gone in from the street and the light had gone out of the window and Mrs Luscombe had

dozed off over her knitting. Then he reached into his waistcoat pocket and took out his watch, on its chain. A plain gold hunter, worn smooth, with a crack in the glass.

He unhooked it from his waistcoat and laid it on the table in front of me.

"I shall not need it," he said. "Where I am going, they tell the time differently."

I looked at him. He looked back, quite steadily.

"On my wrist," he said. "Among other ways. You saw me look for it there, the first night, at Bailey's, and you wrote it down. I knew then that you were the man for this." He pushed the watch an inch closer to me with one finger. "Take it, Hills. Wind it every night. It will remind you that most things that happen in the world happen at an ordinary time, on an ordinary day, and that a man who writes them down as they happen is worth any ten men who explain them afterwards."

I took it. I have it now. It is on the table beside me as I write this, and it has never lost more than a minute in a week, in all these years, and I have wound it every night of my life.

* * *

And then, last, he turned to Ania.

She had been sitting across the hearth all evening, with her cup of tea in both hands, the way Edward held his, with her thumbs over the rim. She drank from it now, quite naturally, without pulling a face. She had stopped pulling the

face sometime in April. She blinked, these days, the way anybody does, not every four seconds, but whenever she happened to. She laughed at Edward's stories on time. If you had met her that spring for the first time, in the street, you would have thought her a quiet young foreign woman with very steady eyes and nothing else remarkable about her at all.

I knew better. But I had begun, by then, to forget to know it.

"You are staying," said Holmes.

It was not a question.

"Yes," said Ania.

"You understand that you need not. That you may come with me, if you wish. Now. On Sunday."

"Yes," said Ania. "I understand." She put down her cup. "I am staying."

Holmes looked at her for a long moment. Then he nodded, slowly, as if she had confirmed something he had known for some time and had not wanted to be sure of.

"Why?" he said. Quite gently. "Tell them why. They should hear it from you."

Ania looked at Edward, and at me, and at Mrs Luscombe asleep by the range.

"Because they will come back," she said. "The grey ones. Not soon. Not for a long time. But they will come back to the bay, and the hand behind the hand will still be here, or its children will. Somebody must be here who knows. Who

remembers what they are, and what they did, when everyone else has forgotten." She paused. "I do not forget. It is the only thing I was made for that I have not had to learn."

Nobody said anything.

"And because," said Ania, more slowly, "I have not finished learning. I learned how to drink tea, in this room. And to hold the cup. And how to sit with somebody all night without speaking, when they are unhappy. And how to breathe on a cold morning so that it shows." She looked at Edward. "I learned that on Hound Tor, Edward, for you. I did not know I could, until I needed to." Then she looked at me. "There is a great deal more. I should like to learn it here. With Rage."

Edward got up, and went round the table, and put his arms round her, in front of all of us, the way you would put your arms round a sister. And she let him. And after a moment, rather carefully, as though it were a thing she had watched other people do and was not quite sure of the order of it, she put her arms round him too.

Holmes watched them. And I watched Holmes. And I saw on his face what I had seen once before, in the back room at Bailey's, on the night I said I never swore to keep Inspector Robinson's peace. The look of a man who has been carrying a heavy thing alone for a long way, and has felt someone take the other end.

* * *

Sunday, 10th May 1896. 4.50 a.m. Paignton sands, below the Esplanade. Low water 5.20. S.H. and self.

He did not go by train.

He had said goodbye to Edward on the Saturday, at the depot, at the end of Edward's turn, in the yard, among the cars. I was not there. Edward told me only that Holmes had shaken his hand, and held on to it, and said, "Thank you for the wolves, Mr Harvey," and that Edward had not been able to answer him, and that Holmes had walked away across the yard past Will's car and out through the gate and had not looked back. Edward took the last car out to Torquay that night and back, as he did every Saturday, and the men on the cars said afterwards that they had never seen him punch so many tickets wrong.

He had said goodbye to Ania I do not know when. I did not ask. I do not think either of them would have told me.

And on the Saturday night he had said to me, at Bailey's, "Walk me down to the sands in the morning, Hills. Early. Before anybody is about. I should like to see the bay once more from the bottom of it."

So I did.

It was a still, pale, milky morning, the kind that comes in May before the sun is up, with no wind at all and the sea lying flat and grey and shining like the inside of a shell. The tide was far out, the furthest it goes, and the sands lay wet and

empty from the pier all the way to Roundham, a great smooth sheet of them, unmarked, with the light just beginning to come into the sky over Berry Head, away to the south. There was nobody on the Esplanade. There was nobody anywhere. The bathing machines stood in their row at the top of the beach with their doors shut, and the gulls were asleep on the pier.

We went down the steps onto the sand, by the place where I had found Peter Venning in the fog on the twenty-sixth of November. I had not stood on that spot since. Holmes stopped there, and looked down at it, at the wet clean sand, for a long moment. Then he walked on, slowly, down towards the edge of the water, and I walked beside him.

He was not wearing the borrowed tweed, or the long coat that shed the rain like oilskin. He was dressed as he had been on the first night, crossing Station Square in October, in the grey travelling coat and the cloth cap, and his boots were clean, with no grit from the moor in the welts. He carried nothing. No bag. No stick.

We stood at the edge of the sea, where the little flat waves came in over the sand and went back, so small you could hardly hear them.

"You will want to know," said Holmes, "what I think. About all of it. Before I go."

I said I would.

He looked out to sea for a while.

"Charles Eden was a hand," he said. "A clever one. A cruel one. Behind him there was a hand that held his. You saw its boot prints on Daddyhole Plain. And behind that hand, Hills, I think there is an arm. And behind the arm, a body, that I have never seen, and do not think I shall. Something that has been in this bay a very long time, and means to be here a great deal longer, and wants—" He stopped. "Ania told you what it wants. To decide what Torbay will be. Who builds, and where, and who comes, and who goes. For a hundred years. That is not a thing that is finished because one man is dead on a cliff. It is not a thing that is finished at all. It only waits."

"And the wolves?"

"I do not know," said Holmes simply. "I have told you that I am not often wrong, Hills. I will tell you now that there are a very few things in this world I do not understand, and they are the most important things I have ever met, and two of them are in this bay. The grey ones are one." He glanced along the beach, towards Winner Street, though you could not see it from there. "The other is staying."

The light was coming up faster now, over Berry Head. Pink, then gold, on the underside of a long low bar of cloud.

"Rage will outlive us all," said Holmes. "I told you that, the night Mr Harvey named it. You asked me how I knew. I said it was a deduction." He smiled, very slightly, out at the

sea. "It was not a deduction, Hills. I was simply telling you something I had already seen."

I did not say anything. I did not know what I could say.

"Keep it going," said Holmes. "You and Mr Harvey. And Ania. Meet at Gran's. Write everything down. Teach your children to write everything down. And when the grey ones come back, and they will, the people who are here will need to know what you knew. That is all Rage has ever been, really. A few honest people in a public house, refusing to forget." He turned his head and looked at me. "It is a great deal more than most of the world manages."

Then he said: "Look at the sunrise, Hills. Over Berry Head. It will be very fine this morning. I should like you to remember it."

And I looked.

I want to set this down exactly. I looked at the sunrise over Berry Head because he asked me to. It was very fine. The sun came up out of the sea all at once, the way it had on Hound Tor, a great red-gold rim lifting out of the flat grey water, and the whole bay caught the light, from Berry Head round to Hope's Nose, every wave and every window and every wet stone, so bright I had to narrow my eyes. I looked at it for perhaps half a minute. Perhaps a little less.

When I turned back, he was not there.

* * *

The sands lay empty in the new sun, all the way along to Roundham, and all the way back to the pier. There was nobody on them. There was nobody on the Esplanade above. There was nowhere, on that great flat open beach, at the lowest of the tide, for a man to have gone in half a minute where I could not see him.

I stood there. I do not know how long.

Then I looked down, and I saw his footprints.

They came down the beach from the steps, beside mine, two sets side by side, the way we had walked. They came to the edge of the water, where we had stood. And then his went on alone. Along the edge of the sea, southward, towards Roundham, a long straight line of them in the firm wet sand just above the reach of the waves, the clean narrow prints of a gentleman's travelling boots. I followed them. I walked beside them, not on them, for perhaps sixty yards.

And there they stopped.

Not at the water. They did not turn into the sea, as the iron foot had done in November. They did not turn up the beach. They simply stopped, in the middle of the wet clean sand, with the left foot a little in front of the right, as if a man walking along at an easy pace had come to the end of where he was, and stepped off it.

There was nothing beyond them. Not a mark. The sand lay smooth and shining and untouched in front of them, all the way to Roundham Head.

I stood over the last two prints for a long time. Then I knelt down on the wet sand, as I had knelt on that same beach in the fog in November, and I took out my pocketbook, and my pencil, and I measured them, and I drew them, and I wrote them down.

I did not do that in March, on the night he came back, when I found the other prints that stopped below the pier. I was too frightened. I have been sorry ever since. I was frightened this time too. But I had promised him. And he had given me his watch, to remind me that things happen at an ordinary time, on an ordinary day, and that a man who writes them down as they happen is worth any ten men who explain them afterwards.

So I wrote it down. The time was eleven minutes past five by his watch.

And then I sat on the sand beside them, with the sun coming up over Berry Head, and waited for the tide. It turned at twenty past. It came in slowly, the way it does on still mornings, with that small regular sound like someone breathing in the next room. It came up over the sand, inch by inch, and reached his last two footprints at a little after six, and filled them, and smoothed them, and took them, and went on in over the place where they had been as if they had never been made at all.

I got up and went home to Mary.

Sun. 10 May. 6.20 a.m. Paignton sands. S.H. gone. Looked at the sunrise over Berry Head because he asked me to. Turned back: not there. His prints along the tide line, south, 63 yds from the steps. Then stopped. Left foot forward. Nothing beyond. Measured: 11¾ in. Drawn, p. 168. Time by his watch: 5.11. Tide took them at 6.04. "Rage will outlive us all. It was not a deduction. I was simply telling you something I had already seen."

CHAPTER 24 – The Last Tram

Saturday, 26th September 1896. E.H. on the last car from the Strand, 10.50. Fine. Wind SE, light. Full moon.

This last part, like the first, I had from Edward. I was not there. I was at home in Princes Street, packing a box of books for Brixham, where I was to take up my sergeant's stripes on the Monday. Mary was asleep upstairs, with the new baby beside her, a boy, born in August, whom we had named Henry, after Harry Mudge, because Mary said a good name ought not to go to waste.

So I will tell it as Edward told it to me, at Gran's, the next night, and many times after. It never changed in any particular that mattered. Edward embroidered most things. He did not embroider this.

* * *

It was the end of the season. The visitors were going home. The big hotels on the front at Torquay were putting up their shutters one by one, and the bathing machines had been hauled up for the winter, and the cars ran half full in the daytime and empty at night, the way they had in the spring, but for the ordinary reason this time. It was a soft, warm, end-of-summer night, with a great yellow moon coming up over

the sea beyond Hope's Nose, and the bay lying flat and silver under it, and no wind to speak of.

Edward had the last car out of the Strand, the 10.50, as he did every Saturday now. He had asked for it. The manager had looked at him a long while, and given it him. Amos Pengelly drove. Amos had asked for it too.

They left the Strand on time, with two passengers, a courting couple who got down at Torre station and walked off up the hill arm in arm. Then there was nobody. Edward stood on the back platform in the warm night and looked at the moon on the water and thought, he told me, about Will, the way he always did on that car, and about Harry, and about the spring.

At Torre Abbey the car slowed for the stop, as it always did, though there was rarely anybody waiting there at that hour. And there was somebody waiting there.

A gentleman. A quiet, well-made gentleman of about fifty, in a dark overcoat and a good hat, with grey side-whiskers and a gold-headed stick. He was standing under the lamp by the Abbey gates, quite alone, as if he had been standing there for some time. As the car came to a stop he stepped up onto the back platform, past Edward, and took off his hat.

"Good evening, Harvey," said Mr Petherick.

Edward said good evening, sir. He told me that his voice came out quite ordinary, and that he did not know how.

In a year and a half on the cars, Edward had never once seen Mr Petherick on any car but the 8.40 in the morning, from Paignton into Torquay. Never in the evening. Never going the other way. Never at Torre Abbey. And never, ever, inside. Mr Petherick always rode on top, at the front, unless it rained, with his *Western Morning News*.

It was not raining. Mr Petherick went inside, into the lower saloon, and sat down on the left-hand seat, about halfway along, where the panels had been scored with the claw in January and been replaced since with new varnished pine that still smelt of the joiner's shop. He laid his stick across his knees. He held out a coin.

"Paignton, Harvey," he said. "First class, if you please."

The exact fare. He always had the exact fare.

Edward took the coin, and punched the ticket, and gave it to him, and marked it on his waybill, the way he had been taught. One fare, at the Torre Abbey stage, inside, first class, through to Paignton. Then he went back out onto the platform and pulled the bell cord twice, and Amos took the car on, out along the sea road, round under the cliffs, towards Livermead.

* * *

He could see Mr Petherick through the glass of the saloon door, Edward said. Sitting quite still, halfway along the empty car, with his hat on his knee and his stick across it, looking out of the window at the moon on the sea. He did not read. He

did not take out his silver box of peppermints. He only sat and looked at the bay, the whole long silver curve of it, from Hope's Nose round to Berry Head, going by.

The car went along the sea front past the Abbey meadows, where Amos had seen the grey shapes cross the road in December. Under the cliff at Livermead, where the road is dark and there are no houses. Past Corbyn Head, the last stop before the long stretch to Preston. Where Charles Eden had got on in January, and paid his fare to Will Coysh, first class, inside.

The car slowed for the stop at Corbyn Head. There was nobody waiting. Amos looked back over his shoulder through the front window, the way drivers do, to see whether anybody wanted to get down.

Mr Petherick stood up.

He came down the saloon to the back platform, unhurried, with his hat in his hand and his stick under his arm. Edward stood aside for him. He stepped down onto the road, under the cliff, in the moonlight, with the sea going in and out over the rocks below, where they had found Will's cap.

Then he turned round, on the road, and looked up at Edward on the platform. He put on his hat.

And then he raised it again.

Not a nod. Not a touch of the brim. He lifted it clean off his head, and held it a moment, the way a gentleman lifts his

hat to a lady, or at a funeral, or to a man he has a particular respect for. He looked at Edward with his pleasant, quiet, well-bred face, in the moonlight, and he smiled.

"Good night, Harvey," he said. "Give my regards to the constable."

Then he put his hat back on, and turned, and walked away up the dark lane that goes up from Corbyn Head through the trees, towards the big villas on the hill above Livermead, swinging his gold-headed stick. Edward watched him until the trees took him. He never once looked back.

Edward pulled the bell cord twice, and Amos took the car on.

* * *

I have thought about that hat more than I have thought about almost anything else in my life, and I have never been able to decide what it meant.

It may have meant nothing at all. A courteous old gentleman, who had ridden behind Edward for a year and a half and given him peppermints for his cold, and sent lilies to the funeral of a driver he had liked, raising his hat to a conductor he had liked on a fine night at the end of the season. It may have been only that. Mr Petherick may have been visiting a friend at Livermead, and taken the last car because it was a fine night, and gone inside because the top deck was damp with the dew. He may have known I was a

constable because the whole of Torbay knew it, after the *Directory*. He may have meant his regards kindly. That is very likely what it was.

Or it may not.

I have never found out. I have never been able to find out. I tried, in the years after, more than once, quietly, as a sergeant and then as an inspector, and every time I tried, the trail went as Charles Eden's had gone, back and back, into perfectly ordinary papers, perfectly in order, until it came to a door I could not open. George Petherick was a gentleman of independent means who lived in a quiet house on the hill above Roundham with two servants, and was a churchwarden, and gave to the poor, and rode the 8.40 into Torquay most mornings for twenty more years, and was very much respected, and died in his bed. That is all that anybody has ever been able to tell me. That is all that anybody has ever written down.

I do not know whether he wore narrow boots, with a low heel. I never thought to look. I have always wished I had.

* * *

The car went on along the sea road, empty now, past Preston, towards Paignton. Edward stood on the back platform, he said, holding on to the rail, and could not stop shaking, and did not know why. Nothing had happened. A gentleman had raised his hat.

And then, a little past Preston, where the road comes out from under the cliff and runs along the front with the sands below it, he heard it.

One voice. Long, rising. Very far off. Not from the moor, and not from the cliffs, and not from Daddy's Hole. From the sea. From somewhere out beyond the bay, beyond Berry Head, in the open Channel, where the moon lay on the water in a long road of light.

One voice. Then nothing.

Edward said he leaned out over the rail of the platform and listened, with the car rattling and swaying under him and the trolley pole hissing on the wire, and he heard it once more, fainter, further. Going away. South. The way Ania had said they had gone, from the edge of Daddyhole Plain, in March.

The car ran on into Paignton. Along the front, past the pier, past the place where we had found Peter Venning. Every house was dark. Every dog in the town was asleep, or awake and silent. Not one of them barked.

Amos Pengelly had heard it too. He did not say anything about it, then or ever. But when the car came into the depot yard at twenty-five to twelve, slow and steady, on time, and stopped exactly where it ought to stop, Amos took his hands off the controls, and sat for a while on the driver's stool on the front platform in the dark, looking at nothing. And then he got down and went home.

* * *

Edward did not go home. Not at once.

He went to his lodgings in Church Street, and up to his room, and lit the lamp, and took down the family Bible from the shelf, the one his mother had given him when he left home. And he opened it between the Old Testament and the New, where he had put it in May, the night Holmes told him to keep it.

The waybill. The old tram waybill from October 1895, gone soft and brown at the creases, with the Company's printed stages on one side and on the other, in faint silver pencil, in Edward's own young hand, the words he had written at the kitchen table on the night he first met Sherlock Holmes.

I would give you my mobile number, but that would do no good.

He sat with it under the lamp for a long time. Then he took a pencil out of his tunic pocket, and underneath, in the space below Holmes's words, he wrote one more line. It was very small, because there was not much room, and his hand was not steady. I have read it many times. I can read it now, without looking, with my eyes shut.

26 Sept. 96. Last car. Mr P. got down at Corbyn Head. Raised his hat. Heard one of them out past Berry Head, going south. Not finished.

He put it back between the Testaments, and closed the Bible, and put it back on the shelf. And then he went to bed, and did not sleep.

* * *

He told us at Gran's on the Sunday night, Ania and me, with Mrs Luscombe knitting by the range, and the cider in the mugs, and the window shut against the first of the autumn.

When he had finished, nobody said anything for a while.

Then I said, "He said give his regards to the constable."

"That's what he said."

"Not sergeant."

Edward looked at me. "No. Constable. Why?"

I did not answer that. I did not need to. I was to be a sergeant from the Monday. Gidley had told me on the Thursday. The *Directory* had not printed it yet. Robinson knew. Very few others did.

Ania had been sitting with her cup in her hands, listening, the way she listened now, with her eyes moving and blinking quite naturally, the way anybody's do. When Edward told about the howl out past Berry Head, she had turned her head, very slightly, towards the south wall of the room. Just for a moment. Then back.

"Ania?" said Edward. "Are they—?"

"Gone," said Ania. "Further now. A long way." She put down her cup. "That was goodbye, I think. For now."

"And Mr Petherick?"

Ania was quiet for a moment.

"He is not gone," she said.

We sat with that.

And then Edward, who was the best of us, and always had been, got up from his bench and stretched, and said, "Well, I don't know about you two, but I've had enough of sitting in Gran's front room being frightened. Jack's off to Brixham in the morning to be a sergeant and lord it over the fishermen. We ought to see him off proper."

"Where?" I said.

Edward grinned. It was the first time I had seen him grin like that since the night of the last car in January. It was the grin he had had in November, in the window at Bailey's, before any of it began, before he knew what he was getting into, when he was only a tram conductor with a story about wolves that nobody would listen to.

"Where d'you think?" he said.

* * *

I have come to the end. Or to the end of this part of it. There is a great deal more, and some of it I may write down one day, and some of it I never shall.

I will say only this, so that whoever reads it knows. Edward Harvey worked the cars until the day the Company took the trams off the road for good, and he married, and had

children, and they had children, and the Bible is in a Harvey house still, with the waybill in it between the Testaments, with Holmes's words on the back and Edward's line underneath. I have asked that it be kept there. I have been promised that it will.

I kept the pocketbooks. There are thirty-one of them now. They will go to my own children, and theirs. And I have told every one of them to write everything down.

Rage did not end. It met at Gran's until Mrs Luscombe died, at ninety-four, in her chair by the range, with her knitting in her lap. After that it met wherever it could. It meets still.

And Ania. I will not write about Ania. Not here. Not yet. I have promised her that too.

His watch is on the table beside me as I write this. It says a quarter past eleven. I wound it last night, and I shall wind it again tonight, and it has never lost more than a minute in a week.

* * *

Sun. 27 Sept. 1896. 10 p.m. Station Square, Paignton. E.H., Ania, self. Fine, mild. Wind SE. RAGE.

It was a fine soft night, that last Sunday in September 1896. The three of us came down Winner Street together in the

dark, Edward in the middle, with his ticket punch in his pocket and his arm through mine, and Ania on his other side with Edward's old muffler round her neck, which she had taken to wearing, though the night was not cold.

We came round the corner into Station Square. The station clock was going ten. The last up train was in, blowing off steam under the canopy, and the porters were slamming the doors. A cab went by, and a brewer's dray. The lamps were lit all round the square.

And in the window of the public bar at Bailey's Hotel, across the square, there was an empty table, with the gas shining on it.

I stopped for a moment, at the edge of the square. I do not know why. I looked across it, at that window, and I thought of a tall thin man in a grey coat coming out of the station nearly a year before, and crossing that square as if it had been laid out for his convenience, between the cabs, without looking at the puddles, towards a young tram conductor who did not yet know that anything was about to happen to him.

Edward tugged my arm. "Come on, Jack."

Ania did not say anything. She looked at me, and blinked, once, slowly, and smiled. On time.

We went to Bailey's Hotel.