

The Wellington Strumpet Mystery

(Sound of rain)

Watson

My name is Dr. Watson, and the story I am about to relate is another tale concerning my curious friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes. It began one dreary and raining afternoon, when my wife and I were seated for tea and the maid brought in a telegram.

Mrs. Watson

Is that another letter from that nut case, dear?

Watson

Mr. Holmes is not a “nut case”, my dear. He’s simply eccentric.

Mrs. Watson

If you ask me he’s out of his bloomin’ mind.

Watson

I didn’t ask you, dearest.

Mrs. Watson

They way he goes on and on about things that any person in their right mind wouldn’t care about...

Watson

Darling, he has brought to justice some of the most dastardly villains England has ever known.

Mrs. Watson

With no thanks to you. If it weren’t for you he’d still be in that loony bin...

Watson

It was just a rest facility. Besides, despite his peculiarities he is able to solve the most amazing crimes in English history. Quite frankly, even though I have recorded dozens of his adventures, I am still at a loss to understand his singular talents and how they work. In any case, let's see what he has to say: (reading)

Have you a couple of days to spare question mark I've just been wired for from the west of England in connection with the Pearl Wellington tragedy stop shall be glad if you will come with me stop air and scenery perfect stop leave Paddington for Reading by the 11:15 stop end

What do you say, my dear?

Mrs. Watson

I think it's a waste of time – he's only going to drag you into one of his fool schemes. What's all this about the Pearl Wellington tragedy?

Watson

I had to think. Pearl Wellington was a popular singer at the time, but I had heard no mention of anything untoward happening to or about her. Yet I was intrigued enough to quickly pack and found myself at the Paddington station. Holmes was pacing up and down the platform when he saw me.

(Station sounds)

Holmes

Ah, Watson. Wedlock suits you. I think, Watson, that you have put on seven and a half pounds since I saw you.

Watson

Well, perhaps seven.

Holmes

And don't you want know how I have deduced you being married?

Watson

You knew I was married, Holmes.

Holmes

I can see that your clothes are neatly pressed and the outfit matches, something your servants were never able to accomplish.

Watson

You were at the wedding!

Holmes

Your tie is neatly tied and you are wearing cologne which is of a fragrance that you do not enjoy – hence you are wearing it for someone else.

Watson

You were the best man!!

Holmes

Lastly, I see that you are wearing a simple gold band upon your left hand ring finger – therefore it is elementary, my dear Watson. Now, I am glad you have come. I like having someone I can rely upon. I will go get the tickets.

Watson

I'd better come with you, Holmes.

Holmes

As you say. Let's go up to the counter here. Ah, my good man, what say you?

Ticket Man

Where is your destination?

Holmes

Wait a minute. I see by the stains on the right forefinger and thumb that you are used to handling a great many printed items daily.

Ticket Man

Yes, well, that's because...

Holmes

And your thick glasses tell me that you spend a lot of time peering closely at tiny print.

Watson

Holmes, I really don't think we have the time for this...

Holmes

And by the watch chain hanging from your vest it is clear to me that you check the time frequently. So it is apparent that you pay close attention to schedules and that you handle tickets daily. Indeed, I would surmise from all of this that you are in the business of selling tickets for the very train station we are in!

Ticket Man

I'm sitting here behind the bleeding counter, ain't I?!

Watson

Let me handle this, Holmes. Can you give us two tickets to Reading?

Holmes

I am **sure** this man is somehow related to the railroad, Watson!

Watson

Despite this anticipated mishap, we were able to take our seats on the train without further trouble. Our trip was uneventful, but when we arrived at the station we were met by a carriage. The door opened up and we got inside. Seated next to us was a woman who was striking in her manner and beauty. She addressed us clearly.

Countess

You are Doctor Watson and Mr. Holmes, I assume.

Holmes

You must never assume, dear lady, for it makes an a...

Watson

(Hurriedly) Yes, yes, we are those two gentlemen.

Countess

You may address me as Countess Von Kramm.

Holmes

Dr. Watson – my eyes tell me that by the crown she is wearing and her regal bearing she is obviously some sort of royalty.

Countess

But I just told you...

Holmes

And her coloration suggests she may be Germanic in origin, perhaps even from Germany itself! Furthermore, the fact that she was inside the carriage that met us at the station suggests to me she may have something to do with this business.

Countess

I was the one who wired you, Mr. Holmes.

Holmes

You see, Watson? She was aware that I was sent a cablegram, which only means she may yet have some part to play in all this.

Countess

Perhaps I have made a mistake in hiring you...

Watson

I can assure you that Mr. Holmes is quite successful in his investigations.

Holmes

My methods are my own.

Countess

Well...

Watson

And I will be there to guide him.

Holmes

I am lost without my Boswell.

Countess

Very well, Doctor. I have this note... (Sound of paper being grabbed)

Holmes

Let me see it! Hmmm, peculiarly strong paper. The “G” with the small “t” stands for 'Gesellschaft,' which is the German for 'Company.' It is a customary contraction like our 'Co.' 'P,' of course, stands for 'Papier'. There is no doubt about this, Watson! Someone wrote this note!

Watson

Well, it stands to reason...

Holmes

It was no doubt a person, perhaps male, perhaps female, but at the very least someone above the age of 3, for the penmanship is firm and steady. And the person who wrote the note is a German, almost certainly.

Countess

I wrote the note, you idiot!

Holmes

You see how the language is in German, don't you Watson? That's the first clue. So, a German man or woman, who writes on Bohemian paper and prefers wearing a mask to showing his or her face and is over the age of three. I think we are making progress!!

Countess

The note was a love letter that I wrote to... someone important to me. And it was important it remain secret. And now someone has discovered it and sent it to me, along with a warning that other letters will see the light of day unless I pay a ransom.

Watson

This is ghastly. By, God, Holmes, you must do something about this!

Holmes

I will, Watson, just as soon as we discover who wrote this note.

Watson

We arrived at the country estate of the Countess Von Kramm that afternoon. Imagine my surprise when we were let into the house by a quite stunning young lady dressed in full butler's uniform!

Good heavens, Holmes! This is quite astonishing!

Holmes

Is it, Watson?

Butler

I take it, Sir, that you have never seen a lady butler.

Watson

Quite right!

Butler

All of the Countess' staff are women, sir.

Watson

Really? How extraordinary.

Countess

I find it much more comforting to have women who can attend to my needs.

Watson

By jove, Holmes, we'll really have something to tell the missus when I get back to London.

Countess

My butler will see you to your rooms, gentlemen. I need to freshen up before dinner. (Footsteps as she leaves)

Watson

Holmes, there was something I forgot to ask you about before.

Holmes

Yes, Watson?

Watson

You mentioned in your wire something about Pearl Wellington. Something about a tragedy. Yet nothing so far in this affair has connected with her.

Holmes

You think not, Doctor? Just what do you know about Miss Wellington?

Watson

Only that she is a singer of some repute.

Holmes

She is that... and more. Indeed, I think before dinner we should take a cab out to the local establishment and pay her a visit.

Watson

We arrived at the local theater district before the evening crowd had come. Before we could make our way to the backstage theater dressing rooms, we were accosted by a flower girl.

Girl

I say, capt'n, buy ya flowers offen a poor girl for your lady?

Holmes

And what lady would that be?

Girl

Well, a fine lookin' gent such as yerself, he ain't outta not have a girl what's to keep him warm, and such.

Watson

Good heavens, Holmes, this street seller can barely speak the King's language!

Girl

I ain't done nothing' wrong by speaking the gentlemen, gov. I've a right to sell flowers if I keep off the kerb. I'm a respectable girl, so help me.

Holmes

He's not accusing you of anything. Other than, perhaps of murdering your mother tongue.

Girl

I ain't done no murder, governor! I'm a good girl, I am. All I want is a room somewhere, away from this cold, and perhaps just one enormous chair. Is that asking too much?

Holmes

I think it would be lovely. Tell me, you spend most of your time selling here, correct? Do you know Pearl Wellington?

Girl

That strumpet?!

Watson

I say, that's rather strong language.

Girl

Sorry, capt'n, but a gerl's get to call a cat by its name, if you follow me.

Watson

I haven't followed you since you first started talking.

Holmes

Just what makes you think Miss Wellington is unchaste?

Girl

Oh, she's chased all right, she is. Every singl' one of them chases her. But they don't catch her.

Holmes

I see.

Girl

She leads them on, don't you know. They get flowr's from me and gives 'em to her, and she bats her eyes and acts all like a lady but she's all about the gets.

Watson

The gets?

Girl

The gets, you know, the perfumes, the flow'rs, the jewels, the **gets!**

Watson

Oh, the gifts!

Girl

That's what I said. (To Holmes) The capt'n here ain't too smart, is he?

Holmes

Dr. Watson is exemplary in his own field.

Girl

Oh, a doctor is it? Well, la de da. Well's, alls I'm a sayin' is that those that wants Wellington, they never gonna have her.

Holmes

Thank you – you've been very helpful. But time's a wasting and we must be going. Why don't you bother these two gentlemen who are approaching, the Colonel and the Professor. I believe you will find them most profitable.

Girl

Colonel and Professor? Do you know them? How do you know who they are?

Holmes

Well, you can see by the...

Watson

I think we should be going, Holmes, and leave this woman to do her job... Perhaps the two that are approaching will have better luck understanding her.

So Holmes and I made our way to the backstage door, where a burly-looking gentleman barred our way.

Doorman

Here, now! What business do the two of you have here?

Holmes

We're here to see Miss Templeton.

Doorman

You and the whole bleedin' navy. "Miss" Templeton isn't seeing anyone. She's gettin' ready for a show.

Watson

Well, Holmes, I guess that is that.

Holmes

Nonsense, Watson. My dear man, Miss Templeton will see us, I can assure you. Give her this card...

Doorman

And just why should I do that?

Holmes

If you don't then you will soon find yourself seeking other employment outside the ring.

Doorman

Well... All right, then, but don't you two move from here! (Door opens and closes)

Watson

Perhaps we had better be going, Holmes. I didn't like the look of that man.

Holmes

Just because he was a pugilist?

Watson

And what makes you say that, Holmes?

Holmes

(Sighs) Once again, you see but you do not observe. There were cuts over both of his eyes, his nose has been broken many times, and his ears are enlarged due to the many blows they have received.

Watson

Yes, yes, I saw all that...

Holmes

And did you notice he was wearing boxing gloves? That he had trouble even taking the card I handed to him?

Watson

Oh, so that's what those were. I thought he was simply cold...

Holmes

(Sighs again) The trouble with you, dear Watson, is that you ascribe my observations of the obvious as merely annoying and yet do not understand that everything I point out is obvious, even those things you do not understand yourself. It is both my gift and my curse to see only the obvious and to never understand that people do not do the same.

(Door opens)

Doorman

All right, in ya goes. Pearl says she'll see you now.

Watson

As the man lead us into the hallway leading to the dressing rooms, I tried to see him as Holmes himself must. True, he was dressed in trunks and a robe that said "Killer Thomas" across the back, and this was unusual enough in the wintertime, but how Holmes had deduced this man was engaged in the sport of fisticuffs was still a mystery, as was so much about Holmes himself.

But even these thoughts were whisked from my mind as we entered the dressing rooms of the famous singer, Miss Pearl Templeton. She was seated at her dressing table, applying the makeup for the night's performance and I was at once struck by her astonishing beauty and poise.

Pearl

So – the great Sherlock Holmes. I have read so much about you. And this man, he must be your chronicler, the worthy Dr. Watson.

Watson

Charmed, my dear lady.

Pearl

Mr. Holmes. Don't you want to kiss my hand as well?

Holmes

I'm afraid it would be a waste of both of our time.

Watson

Holmes! Please be civil.

Holmes

Oh, it's quite all right, Watson. I think Miss Wellington and I understand each other perfectly, don't we? Despite appearances to the contrary, men don't interest you much.

Pearl

You're a man who gets straight to the point, I'll hand you that. But I'm afraid I need to go as my performance starts soon. Perhaps we can meet again later... to talk.

Holmes

We are staying at the Countess Van Kramm's place – I believe you are familiar with it? If you will meet us there tomorrow morning, early, before the Countess rises you will be able to greet us before we have a chance to talk further with her.

Pearl

Until then, Mr. Holmes. (Sound of door opening and closing)

Watson

How extraordinary! I'm afraid I don't understand any of this at all. Just what did you mean when you said it would be a waste of time to kiss her hand? And how did you know she knew of the Countess?

Holmes

As usual, my dear doctor, you are failing to use the power that God gave to you. Look about this dressing room and what do you see?

Watson

Well, I see a good many flowers and boxes of candy, sent to her by her many male admirers, I would imagine.

Holmes

Yes, that's good. Go on.

Watson

Hmmmm, and on the dressing room table there are several signed photographs. I'm guessing these are women relatives.

Holmes

Why do you say that?

Watson

Well, they are fairly provocative photos, not ones that you would give to anyone not a close member of your family. And they are all signed "with love" and some of them are even more explicit in their declarations. By jove, this is quite a demonstrative family. And... why, that looks like...!

Holmes

Yes, it is a signed photo of the Countess.

Watson

So they are related? My goodness, I never would have thought a German Countess and an English singer could have been related.

Holmes

Relations are definitely involved, Watson. In any case, we have learned all we need to know here. It's late, and I'm afraid we have missed dinner and will have to make our apologies to the Countess.

Watson

So we hurried outside, only to run into a well-dressed woman accompanied by two gentlemen leaving the theater.

Girl

(Very cultured speech) Oh, dear Dr. Watson! And Mr. Holmes.

Watson

I'm sorry, dear lady. Do we know you?

Girl

Yes, you remember. I was here earlier, outside the theater.

Watson

I'm afraid I have no memory of that. I'm sure I would remember meeting such a beautiful woman.

Girl

Well, that's quite a compliment, sir.

Holmes

Dr. Watson means it. I, myself, think you are as striking now as you were earlier.

Watson

Holmes! You mean you remember this woman?

Holmes

It is as I say, Watson – you see but you do not observe. Don't you remember the girl selling flowers to us?

Watson

Oh, yes. I remember **her**.

Holmes

And this girl? Does she not have the same height, the same complexion, the same eyes, nose, ears, face?

Watson

(Not understanding) I'm afraid I don't understand what you are getting at here.

Holmes

No, of course you wouldn't, Doctor. My apologies, dear lady.

Girl

None needed, Mr. Holmes. Thank you for the advice – the two gentlemen have been quite instructive.

Watson

We made our way back to the Countess' estate. As he had surmised, we had missed dinner but the staff was gracious in fixing us some table ends. It was a quite glorious feast anyway, and I found myself sleeping rather late that next morning. When I arose I discovered that Holmes had, as usual, been up for some hours.

Holmes, there's something I forgot to ask you last night.

Holmes

You wanted to ask what was on the card I had handed to the doorman to give to Miss Templeton.

Watson

Quite right!

Holmes

On the back of my calling card I had simply lettered the phrase “I know what you did last summer”.

Watson

“I Know what you did last summer”? What the devil ever made you write that, and why did you think that would make her see us?

Holmes

Everyone has secrets, Watson. In any case, it has paid dividends beyond even my imagining, as I see Miss Templeton has arrived here.

Pearl

Dr. Watson. Mr. Holmes. I trust I am not late.

Holmes

I have not yet spoken to the Countess, if that’s what you mean.

Watson

What does that have to do with anything? I’m lost again, Holmes.

Holmes

Miss Templeton here wanted to arrive before I told the Countess that I had discovered everything – including the fact that Pearl was blackmailing her!

Watson

I’m afraid I don’t follow you.

Holmes

It’s clear that Pearl Wellington was the person to whom the Countess was sending those love letters!

Watson

Holmes! Please, behave yourself. I’m sorry, Miss Wellington, for the behavior of my friend.

Pearl

That’s quite all right.

Holmes

Don't you see?

Watson

I have no idea what you are suggesting!! Remember, Holmes, that the Countess was writing the letters to her... er, to her... paramour.

Holmes

Exactly.

Watson

(Trying not to say it in front of Pearl) And Miss Ellington here is a... um, she's a...

Holmes

She is that person, I tell you!

Watson

She's a woman, blast it! Sorry, Miss, for the language. Holmes, she can't possibly be the person the Countess was writing to, don't you see? We're looking for a man.

Holmes

No, I think not.

Watson

Miss, I really must apologize for my friend again, Miss Wellington.

Pearl

(Slyly) No apology is necessary.

Watson

That's very generous of you – it's just that sometimes he gets these very odd...

Holmes

Watson! You still don't get it, do you? The Countess wrote the letters to Miss Wellington when they were together. Miss Wellington acted with some degree of coldness – perhaps she truly cared for the Countess at one point, perhaps not. In any case, when the relationship came to an end Miss Wellington saw a way she might profit from it.

Watson

Holmes. In any case, the relationship, right. I keep telling you, it's impossible! These are two **women** we're talking about!

Holmes

When the Countess saw the letters she couldn't believe that her former lover could be responsible. In that, at least, she was as blind as you are. What I knew was that such a scandal would do nothing other than enhance Miss Wellington's already scandalous reputation, and make her even more in demand. Thus she could eat her cake and have it as well, so to speak.

Watson

All right! That's it. Now even I can't understand your babbling anymore. I'm sure... what's that you have in your hand, Miss? It looks to be a gun. Perhaps I should take charge of that for you.

Holmes

She's about to shoot both of us!

Pearl

That's right.

Watson

Still yet again I must make amends for the odd notions my friend has, Miss Wellington. I know he has behaved abominably, but that's no reason to put yourself in danger by handling that weapon. Perhaps I should take charge of it for you and...

(Sound of gunshot)

Watson

Oh!! It appears to have accidentally gone off! You see, this is exactly what I meant when I said it was a danger to you, Miss, and...

Holmes! What is it?

Holmes

It's a curious thing, my dear Watson. I feel this burning sensation in my side, spreading along the ribs. Hmmmm, there is this warm sticky substance coming from this small hole here in the corner of my vest. I do believe that some sort of projectile has come in through here and (groans). Yes! I think I can state with some certainty that I have been shot. Perhaps in this very room!

(Sound of dropping to the floor)

Watson

Holmes!!! Miss, I must ask you to contact the authorities immediately. And please stop pointing that gun in my direction, it may accidentally discharge again.

Pearl

I'm not quite sure who's more daft, you or Mr. Holmes here.

(Sound of siren)

Pearl

What's that!?

Holmes

(With effort) I took the liberty of contacting the authorities before we came here, Miss Wellington. I explained to them the whole thing. I must say, it took some doing before they could understand me they were as unobservant as Watson here, but it appears they have finally put it together.

Watson

And so ended the curious case of what came to be known as the Wellington Strumpet Mystery. The police were baffled by Holmes' strange narrative and indeed had come to the house to arrest him, but there was no denying that Miss Wellington attempted to murder both Holmes and myself, and thus they had to take her away.

Luckily Holmes' wound was not a serious one, and with myself there to administer quickly to him and his strong constitution he recovered in no time at all. The arrest of Miss Wellington for some reason both pleased and saddened the Countess. She declared that our part in the mystery had been satisfactory in every way.

I must confess there are certain aspects of which I still do not understand. Who, in fact, was the Countess writing to and why did Miss Wellington take such offense at Holmes at the end? We may never know, but it's clear that Holmes had a keen understanding of the situation and, in fact, predicted the outcome when the rest of us were still perplexed and thus is the reason I continue to chronicle the adventures of my friend, the amazing Sherlock Holmes.