



## CASE ONE

### The Case of the Murdered Munitions Magnate

20 March, 1888

Despite the lateness of the month, March is still roaring like a lion. In fact, just as we alight from our cab in front of 221B Baker, a derby hat skitters by propelled by the fierce wind. In close pursuit is none other than Wiggins, chief of the Baker Street Irregulars and, after Dr. Watson, Sherlock Holmes' most able assistant. Before we can join in the chase, Wiggins manages to halt the flying bit of finery with a deft stroke of his umbrella. Cramming it squarely on his head, he saunters back towards us.

"Hello," he says cheerily. "It would appear that Mr. Holmes is summoning the troops. Shall we?"

With the point of his umbrella, a very versatile tool it appears, Wiggins stabs the doorbell. It is several moments before Mrs. Hudson answers. After a brief exchange of greetings, she sends us on our way to Holmes' apartment.

Above, we find Holmes and Dr. Watson sitting at a table engaged in earnest conversation with a gentleman in his late forties, expensively dressed yet somewhat ruffled in appearance.

"Warm yourselves," says Holmes, "and I will explain my reasons for calling you out on such a bitter morning."

Coats and hats are immediately shed—there is a distinct 'pop' as Wiggins removes his derby—and a rush is made for the fireplace. In due course introductions are made, and the gentleman is identified as Mr. Richard Allen, brother of the late Courtney Allen, president of the Grant Arms Company.

"It is the recent death of Mr. Allen's late brother," says Holmes, "that occasions his visit to us. Briefly, Courtney Allen was found shot to death in an alley behind his office on the evening of March 9th at approximately 7:00 p.m. by the constable on patrol. Scotland Yard has put the crime down as a simple robbery 'by person or persons unknown,' largely due to the fact that the victim's wallet was found empty near the body and his gold pocket watch was missing. Mr. Allen was just telling us a bit about his brother when you arrived. Please continue, Mr. Allen."

"Well, Courtney was a dynamic individual. Always busy, forever on the move. Yet he had the unique ability to make ten minutes spent with you seem like an hour, so complete was his attention to you. Of course, his charm worked like a magic potion on the ladies."

"You said he was married?" asks Watson with a raised eyebrow.

"Oh, yes... poor Beatrice."

"Was he involved in an, ah, in an affair at the time of his death?" asks Wiggins.

"Yes, I believe he was, but I have no clue as to who the lady might have

been. You see, the night before he was killed, I popped 'round to his office at about half-past five and managed to coax him to supper at Keen's. We were there but a short while when Courtney begged leave. He indicated that he had an important meeting, said 'Auf Wiedersehen,' and winked. That wink meant a woman."

"Is the company financially sound?" asks Watson.

"Oh, quite. A fine investment for anyone's portfolio. You see, the company was founded as a small gun shop some seventy-odd years ago by our great-uncle Thaddeus Grant. It catered to a very elite clientele."

"Most of the chaps in the regiment were equipped with pistols from Grant's," nods Watson. "Why, Braxton—you've heard me speak of Braxton, Holmes—he had a pair of the finest duelling pistols—"

"Yes, Watson. Pray continue, Mr. Allen."

"Courtney, always fascinated by firearms, apprenticed himself to Uncle Thaddeus. When Thaddeus died in 1873, he bequeathed the business to Courtney. While maintaining the original shop and its tradition, Courtney expanded into the international arms trade. With loans and the sale of public stock, he was able to build a plant at 12 Deverell-street for the manufacture of heavy ordnance. Today the firm is debt-free and very profitable. Of course, a drop in the share price occurred with the news of my brother's death."

"Who has ascended to the presidency?" asks Watson.

"Courtney's picked successor, Phillip Marlowe, the 2nd vice-president."

"And why not the senior vice-president?"

"Young Lord Ragland, who runs the Deverell-street plant is a brilliant technician but a most inept businessman."

"Who inherits your brother's stock?"

"His wife, Beatrice."

"Now I think we might examine the effects found with your brother." So saying, Holmes turns his attention to a briefcase and a large, brown envelope.

"It looks as if some sharp object has been used on it," comments Watson, referring to a long gouge on the leather of the briefcase.

"Yes, and it's practically brand-new. I gave it to Courtney for his last birthday, January 6th. As you can see, it is locked. The police found it that way. Courtney kept the key on a chain attached to his watch fob. The watch, of course, was stolen.

Holmes retrieves a long piece of wire from the coal scuttle. After gaining Allen's permission, he inserts it into the lock and, with a quick flick of the wrist, springs the lock open.

He pulls out several folders for our examination. Each is filled with company papers and is coded to indicate its contents. One marked ML-C, for instance, concerns various coal mine leases. Another, marked S-87-R, contains a listing of sales to the Russian Government during the preceding year. One folder is empty. It is marked SP#10-A.

Holmes then empties the contents of the envelope onto the table. The inventory includes: spectacles and case, a ruby ring, a gold wedding band, a key chain with keys, an empty wallet, a small notebook and a note which reads: "Meet me tonight at Spaniard's - 10 - A.M."

Seizing on the notebook, Holmes observes, "There are two entries on the day of your brother's death. 'Capt. Egan — 8:30 p.m!!!' Can you tell us who Captain Egan might be, Mr. Allen?"

"I've never heard the name."

"The other entry is, 'Plant — 8 a.m. — surprise!' . . . The previous day's entry

is 'Bishop's F — 8:30 p.m.' and a notation that it's 'Billy's Mother's Birthday.'"

"'Billy' is Courtney's secretary, William Linhart."

Holmes compares the writing in the notebook with that of the note. They appear to be identical. He nods and says, "I believe we have enough to begin our investigation."

After Allen has gone, Wiggins comments that his hand gestures were most intriguing. "Combining infinite subtlety with tremendous force, it is easy to imagine that he has no trouble making his wishes known on the floor of the London Stock Exchange."

"I don't recall Allen giving out his occupation," says Watson, puzzled.

"No," replies Wiggins, "but certain phrases he spoke, coupled with the penciled notations on his left shirt cuff, stock prices surely, led me to conclude that he was a stockbroker."

"Bravo, Wiggins! Well, Watson, our young man has come a long way since the days when you described him as 'a dirty, little street arab,' eh?"

"Thank you, Mr. Holmes, but, after all, I was taught by the master."

"True," says Holmes matter-of-factly. "Quite true."