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Night Break

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PROLOGUE

Sherlock Holmes wiped a sleeve across his forehead. He looked at the sleeve as he brought it down. It was dark and damp with sweat.

The sun was high in the sky, almost blinding him, and the heat was like a heavy weight hammering down on his head, even through the scarf he had tied over it. Within seconds his forehead was already soaked with perspiration. It trickled lines of warmth down his cheeks and his neck into his collar, which was sopping wet.

The Suez Canal reached from the horizon on Sherlock's left to the horizon on his right – a deep groove in the sand, a man-made waterway so large that it might have been made by a sword-slash inflicted by the gods. Sparkling blue water filled it from bank to bank. Green bushes and reeds lined its edges. It was so wide that he couldn't have thrown a stone to the far bank, and so deep that ships could be sunk in it and other ships would still be able to pass over their submerged wrecks.

Of course, if he didn't stop the sabotage that was just about to occur: then there would be so many wrecked ships in the canal that they would be piled up above the water's surface, and the canal would be impassable for years to come. The problem was that he really didn't

know how he was going to do that.

'Sherlock,' a voice said. 'I'm sorry it had to be this way.'

He turned around. Rufus Stone was standing a few feet away. The breeze blew his black hair back from his face. The sun shone on his single gold tooth. His expression was . . . regretful. Even sad.

And he was holding a sword.

Sherlock felt his strength, his confidence, draining away. How had it come to this? he wondered. How had he ended up in the disabling heat of a foreign country, about to fight one of his best friends?

He raised his own sword in readiness of the fight to come . . .

CHAPTER ONE

The early afternoon sunlight shone through Charles Dodgson's window. Motes of dust drifted through it, dancing around each other as the currents of air shifted around. Outside, students walked around the quadrangle of the Oxford college where he taught. Their voices drifted through the window along with the sunlight, and just as rarefied.

'So,' Dodgson said from his armchair, which was turned so that Sherlock could see his profile. He was leaning back, staring at the ceiling. 'Have you th-th-thought about that sequence of n-n-numbers that I gave you a while ago? As I recall, it was 1, 5, 12, 22, 35, 51 and 70. Can you t-t-tell me what logic links them, and creates the sequence?'

'Yes,' Sherlock said, 'I worked out what the sequence was. Eventually.'

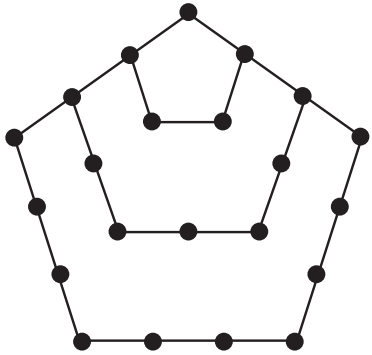
'Please – enlighten me.'

'It's difficult to describe, but it's all to do with pentagrams.'

'P-p-perhaps you could draw the solution for me.' Dodgson indicated a blackboard on an easel that stood over by the fireplace.

Sherlock got up, walked to the blackboard and picked

up a piece of chalk, trying to imagine in his mind the diagram that it had taken him months to work out. Quickly and neatly he sketched out a series of dots on the board and joined them with lines.



'The first point is the "1", of course,' he explained. 'The smallest pentagram has five points, giving us the next "5". The next largest pentagram has ten points, three of which are shared with the first pentagram, but if you add in the two points from the first pentagram which *aren't* shared, then you get the "12". The third pentagram has fifteen points, of which five are shared with the first and second pentagram, but if you add in the seven points from the first two pentagrams which *aren't* shared, then you get the "22". And so on.'

'Excellent,' Dodgson said, clapping his thin hands together. 'And what d-d-does this tell you?'

'It tells me that working this out took an awfully long time.'

'Yes, but what *use* are these p-p-pentagonal numbers?

What do they t-t-tell us about the world? What *significance* do they have?'

'I have no idea,' Sherlock said honestly.

'Quite right. Pentagonal numbers have no significance that I know about – unlike Fibonacci's N-n-numbers, which seem to crop up in all kinds of circumstances. Perhaps we will discover a use for them, or a m-m-meaning, and perhaps not. Only time will tell. The great mathematician Leonhard Euler did do some very int-t-teresting theoretical work with them, of course, and published his results in a p-p-paper in 1783. He showed that the infinite product (1–x)(1–x2)(1–x3) . . . expands into an infinite s-s-series with the exponents being the pentagonal numbers. What do you think of that, then?'

'I can't really take it in,' Sherlock said evenly.

Dodgson didn't spot the sarcasm, or if he did, then he chose to ignore it.

The tutorial went on for another hour, ranging over many areas of mathematics, and by the time Sherlock left he felt that his head was buzzing. It took a long walk in the cold but bright afternoon air to calm him down.

When he got to Mrs McCrery's's boarding house, where he was staying while in Oxford, he found Matty outside, sitting on the wall. A black-painted cab was parked in the road. Its driver sat reading a newspaper on top, while its horse stood calmly with its eyes closed, relishing the rest.

'You got a visitor,' Matty observed, jerking his thumb at the cab.

'I can see that,' Sherlock said. He walked up to stand beside the wheel closest to the kerb and stared in through the window. Nothing had been left inside, but the cushions had been dented by the weight of the passenger's body – and it looked like it had been a considerable weight.

'My brother,' he observed, amazed. 'Mycroft is here.'

'That was clever. Does 'e have a particular aftershave he uses?'

'Not exactly.' Sherlock decided not to tell Matty that he had recognized his brother by the size and shape of his buttocks. 'Where is he now?'

''E's inside now, 'avin' a cup of tea wiv the old lady.'

'But Mycroft hates travelling.'

'Russia,' Matty observed, holding up a thumb, then, 'Ireland,' as his forefinger joined it . . .

'I take the point,' Sherlock said, 'but what I meant was, he only travels if there is an overriding reason. Mycroft does not make social visits.'

''E does where you're concerned. 'E takes a lot of trouble to make sure you're okay.' He sniffed, and wiped a sleeve across his nose. 'Wish I 'ad a bruvver.'

'You've got me,' Sherlock observed. He gazed at the boarding house. 'I know I ought to go in and find out what Mycroft is doing here, but experience tells me that he only ever turns up when there's trouble or when my

life is about to change. Either way, it tends to be bad.'

'You can't put off bad news by stickin' your fingers in your ears an' pretendin' you can't hear it,' Matty said, jumping down from the wall. 'If life's taught me anythin', it's that. Best to get it over an' done wiv quickly. Like rippin' a bandage off a scab.'

Sherlock nodded slowly. 'That's good advice.'

'Hey, what else is a bruvver for?' Matty punched his arm. 'Come an' tell me about it when you get a chance.'

Sherlock grabbed his sleeve. 'What makes you think you're avoiding this? If there's bad news, I want you there with me.'

'Why?' Matty asked.

'Because *that's* what brothers do, as well.'

The two of them walked up the steps and through the door of Mrs McCrery's house together.

Sherlock immediately heard his brother's voice from inside the front room. He stood in the doorway, Matty beside him, and coughed.

Mycroft's voice broke off in mid-sentence, and Mrs McCrery appeared in the doorway. 'Ah, young Mr Holmes. Your brother Mycroft is here. We were just reminiscing about his time at Oxford.'

'I've heard the stories,' Sherlock replied.

'I'll be making another pot of tea. I'd offer you a cake, but your brother's appetite is as good as it ever was and they're all gone. I'll see if I can find some biscuits for you and young Matthew here – I know this young scallywag

gets so hungry he could eat a horse!'

'Don't say that when 'Arold's around,' Matty muttered. ''E takes that kind of thing personally.'

'Thank you,' Sherlock said. As Mrs McCrery bustled away, he stepped into the room.

Mycroft had wedged himself into a comfortable armchair near the window. Sherlock suspected that he might need to use a rope and the services of the horse outside to pull him out, when the time came.

'Ah, Sherlock,' Mycroft said. 'It gladdens my heart to see you again. And young Master Arnatt, of course, there by your side like an ever-visible shadow.'

''Allo, Mister 'Olmes,' Matty said brightly.

Mycroft's large head moved so that he was staring back at Sherlock again. 'Sherlock, I need to tell you something, and it is not the kind of thing one talks about in front of relative strangers.'

'Matty is like family now,' Sherlock pointed out. 'I want him here.'

'Very well. Rather than beat around the bush, I will get straight to the point. I am sorry to have to tell you that our mother has died.'

The words seemed to hang in the air like the echo of some vast bell. Sherlock tried to take a breath, but somehow he couldn't get the air into his lungs. Even the light in the room appeared to change, as if a cloud had drifted across the face of the sun, casting the house in shadow.

'Died,' he repeated. 'Mother is *dead*?'

'Indeed. I realize that this comes as a shock to you, as it did to me, but –'

'Mother has *died*?'

Mycroft sighed. 'Yes, Sherlock, that is correct. Take a moment, if you need it, to come to terms with the information.'

In his head, it was as if Sherlock was turning over a selection of different feelings, trying each one to see if it fitted. Surprise? Grief? Anger? Acceptance? He wasn't sure how he should be feeling right at that moment. His fingers were tingling strangely, and he had the impression that he was swaying slightly. He couldn't feel his feet. He opened his mouth, but no words came out. There were no words to *come* out: his mind was empty.

'Matthew,' Mycroft said urgently. 'Help Sherlock to a chair.'

He felt Matty's hands on his shoulders, guiding him sideways. Moments later he found that he was sitting down, although he had no recollection of doing so.

'How?' he asked finally. 'When?'

'As to "how": you know that she has been ill for some time. The disease called consumption, which is better known to the population at large as tuberculosis. It is a disease which attacks the lungs. There are various treatments, including rest and visits to sanatoriums in places with cold pure air, such as the Alps in France and Switzerland, but generally the results of these treatments are not positive. The disease finally weakened her system

to the point where she did not have the strength to carry on the fight. She became weaker and weaker, and then she slipped away.' His voice was quiet, and Sherlock could hear within it all the same emotions that he was struggling with. 'As to "when": I received notification this morning that she had died during the night. I immediately took a cab to Paddington, a train to Oxford and a cab here. I did not want there to be any delay in you finding out.'

'What happens now?' Sherlock asked quietly. The various emotions that he had been feeling just moments before seemed to have drained away, leaving an emotional landscape like a beach from which the tide had withdrawn: bare, desolate, and littered with old memories like items of driftwood and sea-smoothed pebbles.

'We need to go home.' Mycroft paused for a moment. 'There will be a funeral, and there will be medical expenses to sort out.'

Sherlock nodded. 'I understand. When do we go?'

'Immediately.' Mycroft put his hands on the arms of the chair and pushed downward. Nothing happened apart from the sound of the wood of the armchair creaking. 'I suggest,' he went on, resting for a moment before trying again, 'that you go and pack for the journey. Assume that you will be gone for a week or so.' He pushed again with his hands on the arms of the chair, but still his body didn't move. 'And while you are doing that,' he said, settling down again, 'I would appreciate it if you, young Master Arnatt, could go outside and bring the driver of

my cab in here. I may need his assistance.'

Still in a daze, Sherlock walked up the several flights of stairs to his room and quickly threw some clothes into a suitcase without checking what they were or whether they were suitable. Matty joined him after a few minutes and silently watched. He grabbed his violin case as well, before leaving the room. He and Matty headed downstairs together, and Sherlock found himself wondering as they did so whether he would ever see Mrs McCrery's boarding house again, or any of the students there that had become friends. Perhaps, like Deepdene School for Boys and his Uncle Sherrinford's house, this place was destined to become just another temporary stop on his journey through life.

Mycroft was standing in the front room looking slightly flustered and brushing down the front of his jacket. The armchair looked like it had been in a fight, and not come out too well. Mycroft nodded when he saw Sherlock's bag. 'Good. We are ready to go then.'

Sherlock turned and stuck out a hand to Matty. 'I'll be seeing you,' he said, feeling a catch in his throat. 'I don't know where, and I don't know when, but I will be seeing you again.'

Matty stared at the hand as if he didn't know what to do with it, but it was Mycroft who broke the uncomfortable silence. 'Actually,' he ventured, 'I was wondering if young Master Arnatt would be free to accompany us. I think, Sherlock, that you will need a friend, and my time will be

taken up with arranging the funeral and various family matters. I am unsure what state the family finances are in, and I need to assure myself that we are not already destitute. It would be good for you to have someone with whom you can talk.'

Sherlock glanced at Matty, who was looking surprised. 'Me? Come wiv you?'

'If you are free.'

'I'm always free,' Matty said. 'Yeah, I'll come – if Sherlock wants me to.' He gazed at Sherlock appealingly.

'I do,' Sherlock said. He turned to his brother. 'Thank you.'

'Friends are important,' Mycroft said quietly. 'I have realized that through the simple expedient of not having any myself. Master Arnatt, do you need to make arrangements for the care of your horse?'

'Nah – there's people along the side of the canal who borrow 'Arold while I'm not using him. They feed 'im, and look after 'im, and make sure 'e's 'appy. They prob'ly won't even notice that I've gone.' His face fell. 'An' neither will 'Arold, which is a shame.'

'What about clothes?'

Matty stared at Mycroft, frowning.

'Spare clothes,' Mycroft explained.

Matty just kept on staring at him.

'Never mind.' Mycroft sighed. 'We can get clothes for you when we get to the house. At least we will be carrying fewer bags.' He turned to Sherlock. 'And as for your

studies at Oxford University, such as they are,' he went on, 'I have taken the liberty of sending a note around to Charles Dodgson, giving him my regards and explaining the situation. He will be very understanding, I am sure.'

The three of them walked out to the waiting cab, where the driver threw Sherlock's case on top to join one that was already there.

'You packed!' Sherlock observed accusingly. 'You said that you took a cab to Paddington Station the moment you heard, but you must have stopped off at your rooms to pack!'

'Your usually sharp mind is letting you down,' Mycroft replied. 'I will put that down to the effects of shock. I did not lie to you – I keep a several bags packed with fresh clothes and toiletries in my office, in case I need to travel in a hurry.'

'But you don't like travelling,' Matty observed.

'That is irrelevant. Firms do not generally like or expect their premises to burn down, but they take out fire insurance nevertheless. I do not like travelling, but sometimes it is necessary to do so in a hurry. As it is now.'

As the cab pulled away from the kerb, Sherlock looked back out of the window. Mrs McCrery was standing in the doorway of her house. She seemed to be waving, but Sherlock's eyes were suddenly and unexpectedly filled with tears, and he couldn't be sure.

The journey to Oxford Station was short, but there was an hour's wait for a train and so Mycroft bought them both tea and cakes in the tea shop there. It took a

few minutes for the serving girl to bring them over, but when she had, Matty tucked in with gusto. Sherlock, by contrast, found that his appetite just wasn't there. When Matty had finished his own cake, Sherlock pushed his wordlessly across to the boy.

'What about our sister?' he asked suddenly. 'How is she taking the news?'

'Her mental state is fragile,' Mycroft rumbled. He had eaten two cakes himself. 'Sometimes she is aware of what is going on around her and sometimes she seems to be living in a world of her own. Whatever world she visits, I have a feeling it is more congenial than the world the rest of us live in.' He paused momentarily. 'I understand that she has a suitor – a man whose acquaintance she has made and who seems to have some kind of romantic feelings towards her. I intend meeting with this man and establishing what kind of person he is before we return.'

'Emma – with a man?' Sherlock thought back to the pale girl he remembered. She had always seemed to drift through the house like a ghost, not talking to anyone, immersed in her own thoughts. Younger than Mycroft but older than Sherlock, she had inherited their mother's physical fragility and, apparently, their father's mental fragility.

'You are thinking about our father's problems,' Mycroft observed, 'and how our sister appears to have inherited them.'

Sherlock was amazed. He shouldn't have been – he

had seen his brother demonstrate his amazing deductive abilities before, but this time he was the subject. 'How did you know that?' he asked.

'Was you really thinkin' 'bout that?' Matty asked, intrigued.

'I was.'

Matty looked darkly at Mycroft. ''E read your mind then. I always suspected 'e could do that. The Dark Arts – that's what they're called.'

'That wasn't mind-reading,' Mycroft said, shaking his huge head. 'That was merely observation. Do you see the serving girl at the counter? She is roughly the same age as our sister. When Sherlock mentioned Emma's name his gaze shifted so that he was looking at the serving girl. Obviously he was thinking about Emma, and the girl was merely a mental stand-in, if you will. His gaze shifted to the plates and cups on the table, no doubt observing that the serving girl had got our order perfectly correct, whereas Emma would either have forgotten the order, served the wrong cakes, or spilt the tea. Sherlock's glance then shifted to me, and then to his own reflection in the window of this tea shop. I deduced that his thoughts had similarly shifted to the differences between Emma and the two of us. In particular I noticed that he was unknowingly comparing my hand with his – we both have comparatively long fingers, which is a trait we share with our mother. She, by the way, was excellent at both playing the piano and needlework. Sherlock finished by

glancing at the station guard outside, whose uniform would have reminded him of our father's Army uniform, and then upward, to where the Christian Church tells us that heaven is located. It was a simple progression of thought to deduce that he had moved on to thinking about our parents, and how we had all inherited something different from them.'

'Incredible,' Matty breathed.

'Commonplace,' Mycroft said dismissively. 'Even elementary.'

'We've never really talked about Father's problems,' Sherlock said, looking at his brother. 'You know that Uncle Sherrinford and Aunt Anna told me about them?'

'Uncle Sherrinford wrote and told me that the conversation had occurred. I decided that if you needed to talk about it, then you would, and that there was no need for me to needlessly raise the subject.' He glanced at Matty. 'I also know that Master Arnatt was present during the conversation, and I trust him to keep any information he heard to himself.'

Matty nodded seriously.

'Father is a complicated man,' Mycroft observed. 'You were, perhaps, shielded from his mood swings, but I experienced them first hand. There were times when he would stay in his study for days, just staring into space, and other times when he would suddenly decide at three o'clock in the morning to change around all the paintings in the house. His time in the –' he hesitated briefly –

'sanatorium calmed him down, but he will always be eccentric. Fortunately he has taken one of the four career courses where eccentricity is tolerated and rewarded if it is combined with competence – the British Army. The others, of course, are the Church, the theatre and academia.'

'Interesting that Uncle Sherrinford chose to write sermons for vicars around the country,' Sherlock observed. 'He didn't actually join the Church, but he did the next best thing. I suspect his mind was closer to Father's than he would ever have admitted.'

'Interesting also that *you* play the violin and have shown a strong interest in the theatrical life,' Mycroft said without missing a beat. 'I am the exception, of course – I am not a don, or a lecturer.'

'But Charles Dodgson told me that he thought you had the makings of a fine academic, and he was both saddened and surprised that you joined the Civil Service,' Sherlock rejoined.

'It strikes me,' Matty suddenly piped up, 'that I don't even know where your family live.'

'Sussex,' Mycroft said. 'A small town named Arundel. The Holmes family have a large house a few miles outside the town.' He checked his watch. 'The journey will take around three hours, and we will have to change trains several times. Oh, and that reminds me . . .' He patted his pocket, then slid his hand inside and pulled out an envelope. 'This arrived a few days ago. It is from Father, in India. I thought you might wish to read it.'

Mycroft placed the envelope on the table between them. Sherlock stared at it – at the familiar writing on the front, at the strange Indian stamps that adorned it, and at the various creases and stains it had picked up during its travels. A terrible thought occurred to him.

'Father doesn't know,' he whispered.

'I have written a reply to his letter,' Mycroft said, equally quietly, 'in which I break the tragic news.' He paused. 'I have also written separately and privately to his commanding officer, notifying him of the family bereavement and asking him to keep an eye on Father to make sure that . . . that he deals with the news. I have no great faith that his mental state is stable, given his location so far from home, and the privations of the British Army in India.'

My Dearest Sons,

It is one of the responsibilities of a father to pass on to his scions the wisdom that he has learned during his time on Earth. Sadly, given that I am currently many thousands of miles away from you, and am likely to remain in this geographical location for some time to come, I am unable so to do. I have spent much of my spare time here racking my brains for little gems of philosophy that might be of service, but I have come up with nothing that you could not (and probably already) have found in Plato,

Socrates and the pages of Punch magazine. All that I am able to do is to give you some flavour of the environment, the people and the events here in India - so different from dear England, the land that we all love and which I dream about every night.

I recall that I have, in previous letters, written about the landscape of this strange country - the flat plains, the hills, the rivers and the towns. I remember also writing about the weather, which is either far too hot or far too hot and far too wet. I have also, I believe, given you some flavour of the various people who call this place their home. What I may not have done is to try to explain what my life is like day to day. You may have the impression that, being in the British Army, I am fighting all the time. You may even worry about me. I can reassure you that I spend considerably more time polishing my buttons, my belt and my boots than I do in combat, and that I am more at risk from disease and snakebite here than from a bullet or a knife.

I should, I suppose, say a few words about the strict hierarchy of this society, by which I mean the society of English people living here in India, not the society of the Indians themselves (although we seem to have taken on some of their ideas). The highest of the high here are

called the Brahmins - a word borrowed by the way from the Indians, who have had a very well established caste system for thousands of years. As with their castes, members of our own different levels stick to their own - nobody ever socializes outside their equals. If you try, then you are reported and disciplined, and if you persist, then you may well be sent home in disgrace. The Brahmins are the members of the Indian Civil Service - the ones who actually govern and run this country. Beneath them are the semi-Brahmins - the members of the various other Government departments such as the Forest Service and the Police Service. Beneath them are the military forces, and that is where I fit in. Beneath the military are the businessmen - those who work in commerce - and beneath them are the traders - the shop workers and suchlike. Towards the bottom of the social order you find the menial workers, and at the absolute bottom are those English people whose families have, for whatever reason, chosen to settle here in India and make a life for themselves.

It wasn't, Sherlock thought, too far away from the various stratified levels of British society. Even in his former school – Deepdene School for Boys – there had been a very definite difference between the boys who came from

the aristocracy, the boys whose fathers were in the Army, the boys whose fathers were in commerce and the boys whose fathers worked in trade.

Given that each level of English society here in India socializes exclusively with its own, I do not get to speak to the Brahmin, the semi-Brahmin or the mercantile class unless on business. I spend a great deal of time here on the cantonment, which is what we call the military base where my regiment is stationed. Here life is driven by the various parades, and becomes not only very predictable but very boring as well. For instance, a month or so back one of the soldiers was carrying a plate of food from the mess to his barracks when a hawk swooped down from the sky, snatched the meat off the plate and flew off with it. We are still talking about it, even now. That is how bored we are.

The highlight of our lives here in the cantonment are the formal dinners. The food is certainly not much to write home about, which is why I have not previously done so. Because of the extreme heat and the prevalence of disease, any animal that is butchered must be eaten straight away or the meat will spoil. The meat itself is always tough - tough chicken, tough mutton and sometimes (although it angers

the natives) tough beef - the natives who follow the Hindu religion worship cows, and get very offended if we eat them. The meat is usually 'curried', which means it is cooked with strong spices, and that helps to make it digestible.

The formal military dinners consist of seven or eight courses, and we do, of course, dress up for them - tail coat, boiled shirt with stiff collar and cuffs and a white waistcoat. These conventions are preserved even on patrol outside the cantonment, and I have seen people arrive for dinner out in the wilds on camels, but still wearing their formal dress. In the cantonment the strict rule is that nobody is allowed to leave the table until the Colonel in charge of the regiment leaves, which means in practice that if several bottles of wine have been drunk in the bar beforehand, then there are a lot of increasingly uncomfortable men around the table as the dinner wears on!

It is Sunday here, as I write this letter, although the sun which shines down so heavily on us now has yet to shine on you in England, and by the time it does shine on you it will be dark here. I attended the church service this morning, as we all do every Sunday. The church is exactly the same as it would be back in England, and sometimes, while we are all

gathered there singing hymns or praying, it is possible to imagine that we aren't in India at all, but are back home, in Aldershot perhaps. At least, it would be possible if it weren't for the heat radiating from the stones, the insects buzzing around our heads and the fact that the pews have notches cut out of them for us to rest our guns in. Yes, we take our guns into church with us. I wonder what Jesus, with his feelings against moneylenders in the grounds of the temple, would have made of that.

I mentioned earlier the weather, which is either far too hot or far too hot and far too wet. We dream of cold, and of snow. The excessive heat here leads to many problems, two of which are the diseases and the insects. As far as diseases go, I could write a book about them by now, but suffice it to say as an example that there is something called 'prickly heat', which sounds very civilized but in actuality means that your skin is covered so thickly with itching pimples that you cannot slide a needle between them. I have seen a man start off dinner scratching himself lightly and finish by tearing his fingernails down the skin of his chin and neck so hard that he drew blood. As far as the insects are concerned, they go in cycles. One week there will be stink bugs everywhere - in your bedding, in your soup, in

your ink pots. They are innocuous unless you crush them, in which eventuality they give out the most appalling smell. The next week the stink bugs will be gone but in their place will be jute moths which, if you absent-mindedly brush them off when they land on your hand, leave behind some chemical secretion that burns you.

They call this place 'the land of sudden death', but there are times when I wonder if death would be preferable to living in constant discomfort, pain, boredom and torment.

I must cease writing now, or I will say things that perhaps I should be keeping to myself. Please write back to me - it is your letters, along with the letters from your mother and your sister, that keep me sane.

Yours sincerely,
Your loving father,
Siger Holmes

Sherlock finished the letter and folded it up very carefully. He handed it back to Mycroft without saying anything. Neither of them had to. It was clear from his words that their father's mental state was deteriorating out there in India. Discovering that his wife, their mother, had died in his absence – as painful as that was to Sherlock, what would it do to his father?