BLOOMSBURY

THE GREAT SHELBY HOLMES

Meets her Match



ELIZABETH EULBERG

Illustrated by MATT ROBERTSON

THE GREAT SHELBY HOLMES
Meets Her Match



ELIZABETH EULBERG
Illustrated by MATT ROBERTSON

BLOOMSBURY
LONDON OXFORD NEW YORK NEW DELHI SYDNEY



CHAPTER ONE

You'd think having a friend who's a know-it-all would be annoying. And OK, at times it really, really is. *But* it can also be fascinating. And extremely helpful.

Especially if it's your first day at a new school.

'I see Sasha's parents didn't take her to Greece like they promised,' Shelby remarked as we walked down the hallway at the Harlem Academy of the Arts. I followed her gaze to a white girl with her blonde hair in a pony-tail. There was absolutely nothing about this girl that would've led a normal person to think that Sasha didn't go on some family vacation.

But while Shelby Holmes was many things, normal wasn't one of them.

'How did you –' I began to ask before she cut me off.

'Like it isn't obvious,' she replied with a huff.

A teacher standing outside a classroom looked up from a folder. As soon as he saw Shelby, he quickly turned around, went into his classroom, and closed the door.

The only thing that seemed obvious to me was that there was a path being cleared for Shelby as we walked. I'd learned a few things from Shelby in the three weeks I'd known her. One was to make deductions based on people's behaviour. Right now, I was deducing that nobody in the school wanted Shelby to do that thing she did.

Me included.

I also learned to listen to everything she says. And that she's always right.

While she kept casually spilling the secrets of our classmates and teachers as we continued down the hall, I looked around my new school. From the outside, it seemed like a standard school building: red brick and nothing special. But as soon as we stepped inside, it was everything I'd hoped a school focused on the arts would be: the walls were covered with student artwork, music filled the halls, and there were try-out flyers up for the autumn term musical. There was even an entire glass display case filled with books. But they weren't regular



books found in other schools. These were the yearly anthologies the Academy put out featuring the best student writing.

Someday I'll be in there, I hoped.

Yeah, I could totally get used to a place like this. I had two classes where I got to focus on my writing. *Two! And* I was going to be staying here. No more moving for the Watsons. We were making New York City our home.

Of course that meant I really needed to make a good first impression, since I'd be sticking around. I was used to being the new kid. I mean, I'd spent all eleven years of my life moving from army post to army post. But this was my last day as the new kid at a new place. It was different.

Shelby grunted, which brought me back to her orientation of my new classmates. 'Like it isn't abundantly apparent she got kicked out of camp this summer.'

'Who are you talking about?' I glanced around the hallway.

'Watson,' Shelby said with a disapproving shake of her head. 'What have I been telling you about observing?'

'I have been observing, but it would help if you could tell me *how* you know these things. Or, you know, start

with *who* you're even talking about.' My eyes swept my fellow classmates to find a clue about anything having to do with *anyone* at this point. I kept observing the same things as Shelby, but could never see what she saw.

'Fine!' she said with a groan. Her hand flew up and pointed to three girls talking by a locker. 'Do you see how two of the girls have matching home-made rope bracelets? Standard last-day-of-camp fare. Pretty uninspiring if you ask me. Charlotte's not only missing one, but notice the lack of colour on her, unlike the other two.'

Yeah, the two other girls were more tanned or whatever, but that could mean anything. How on Earth did Shelby come up with someone being kicked out of camp?

OK, I technically know how she did it. By deductive reasoning. But that doesn't mean I fully understood it. What Shelby's been trying to teach me to do is to assemble a list of likely scenarios based on observations, and then decide which option fits best. In the case of these three girls, the only scenario I had was that just one of them used sunscreen.

Shelby took my silence as ignorance. 'I had to listen to them blather on and on last year about their horseback riding camp. So the missing markers of attending

said camp for an extended period were glaringly obvious on Charlotte.'

But I wasn't here last year, so how could *I* have known?

'And no, you're not off the hook simply because you weren't here last year,' Shelby said as if she had read my mind. Maybe she had. 'What can you tell by their interaction? Look closely,' she instructed me.

I studied the three girls. Hmm . . . Now that Shelby pointed it out, the two tanned girls were talking animatedly, moving around their hands, laughing and talking over each other. While the other girl shifted uncomfortably from foot to foot, giving a polite smile every once in a while. So she didn't know the story the others were telling. And appeared a little jealous of it.

Maybe Shelby was right. (Wait, there's no maybe. She *was* right.)

'OK, one girl feels left out, but still . . .' I could only see things once Shelby pointed them out. It was hard for me to put two and two together with basically nothing.

Shelby continued to walk down the hallway, while I tried to come up with more deductions.

'Maybe she has an allergy and couldn't go?' I took a stab in the dark.

'She went the previous year. It was all she talked about at the beginning of fifth grade.'

'Oh, so you're friends.'

Shelby stopped and looked at me with her patented look of disgust and aggravation. It was a look I'd got used to pretty quickly. 'Friends? Oh, please be serious, Watson.'

I knew Shelby didn't really think friends were important, but was it such a ridiculous assumption? Shelby was familiar enough with this Charlotte person to know she went to camp every summer. That would've required a conversation, wouldn't it? Some friendly banter? She couldn't decipher everything about a person by simply observing.

'Freak!' someone shouted in the hallway to the sniggers of a few students.

On the other hand . . . maybe Shelby really didn't have friends, since everybody at this school was aware of what she could do – most of her clients were her classmates – and seemed to want no part of her.

I don't know. I just assumed everybody at school would think that she was weird (because she was) but still be impressed by her. I'll admit that I thought she

was just a freaky science geek when we met on my first day in our new apartment building. But once I got past her grumpy attitude, I respected her. Everybody in our Harlem neighbourhood admires her for her abilities.

But instead, when Shelby walked by, shoulders tensed and voices lowered.

It didn't take a genius of Shelby's calibre to realise that she wasn't well liked at school.

And here I was, on my first day, walking down the hallway with her. So much for a great start.

Stop it, John. I reminded myself that Shelby had helped me a lot during my first few days in New York City. We were friends. (OK, she was my *only* friend here.) Plus, we were partners.

Shelby stopped dead in her tracks, to the unease of the students around us. She was staring at a teacher who was in the hallway greeting students.

'The new science teacher, Mr Crosby,' Shelby informed me, but there was an edge to her voice.

I ignored the stares from the kids around us as I waited for her to tell me about our teacher.

Shelby remained quiet, her eyes surveying Mr Crosby. My guess was that she was building up tension, something she liked to do, for a dramatic reveal.

'Well?' I asked her, anxious to get to my first class.

Then Shelby Holmes, detective extraordinaire, said the three words I thought would never come out of her mouth.

'I don't know.'



CHAPTER TWO

I'm not sure what worried me more: that there was something the great Shelby Holmes didn't know, or that she marched right up to the new teacher and dropped to the floor to start examining him from the shoes up.

'Excuse me?' Mr Crosby asked the top of Shelby's red frizzy curls. 'Can I help you with something?'

When Shelby didn't answer, Mr Crosby looked at me.

Since this poor teacher was new, I guessed somebody needed to tell him that Shelby was just being . . . well, Shelby.

And that lucky person was me.

'Hi,' I said with a friendly smile. 'I'm John Watson. It's my first day here, too.'

'Hello, John,' Mr Crosby replied as he moved his feet

around in an effort to shake off Shelby. Of course this only resulted in irritating her. 'Nice to meet you.'

'You, too. I just moved to the neighbourhood from Maryland, near DC. My mom used to work in the military. Now she's a doctor over at the Columbia University Medical Center.' I don't know why I felt the need to give Mr Crosby my life story, but I was trying to put him at ease while Shelby did her thing.

In the short time we'd been working together, this had become my role in our partnership. Although it had taken a while for Shelby to realise that she needed my help. She definitely had the smarts to solve cases on her own, but it was her people skills that needed some work.

'Yeah, this is –'

'Shelby Holmes,' Mr Crosby finished my sentence. 'Yes, I've been . . . informed.' I was pretty sure he'd been *warned*, but caught himself.

I attempted to do my own investigation of Mr Crosby. He looked like your typical white guy teacher: blue button-down shirt, khaki pants and brown loafers. He was probably in his late twenties. He had short brown hair, brown eyes and an average height and build. Pretty standard. Nothing remarkable about him.

Maybe not everybody had some story that Shelby



could decode by a smudge on their glasses or how they tied their shoes.

Could it be possible that Mr Crosby was simply a regular, boring teacher?

Shelby finally stood up and narrowed her eyes at him.

'Hello, Shelby,' Mr Crosby said with a hesitant smile. 'Did you find whatever you're looking for?'

Shelby's scowl confirmed that she, in fact, had not. 'You taught at a private school before? No!' she screeched. 'Don't tell me!'

Mr Crosby's attention shifted again to me. 'Why don't I make this easy for everybody: I taught at Miss Adler's School for Girls on the Upper East Side for –'

'Two years,' Shelby interrupted him. 'Yes, I'm not an imbecile.'

Mr Crosby's eyes grew wide. 'How did you . . . ?'

Apparently he didn't take those warnings about Shelby seriously.

'It's just this thing she does.' I repeated the line that I'd been told when I had first met Shelby. It was something I'd been forced to say a lot these last three weeks.

My attention drifted to a familiar face in the hallway. It took me a second to remember that I already knew one other person who goes to the Academy.

'Tamra!' I called out.

Tamra Lacy was walking down the hall with three other girls. Even though she had on the same maroon Harlem Academy of the Arts polo shirt that every student wore, it was clear from her appearance that Tamra had money. I mean, yeah, I already knew that from being at her family's insane mega-apartment that overlooked Central Park. (And having met her family's personal chef and maid and driver.) But it was more than that. It was the way her black patent leather shoes shone in contrast to the

other girls' canvas shoes, and how neatly pressed her shirt was compared to the wrinkles the majority of us sported.

Maybe my deductive reasoning wasn't so shabby after all.

Yet there was one mystery I couldn't figure out: why Tamra didn't seem to hear me.

'Tamra!' I called out again. 'Hey!'

Her dark brown eyes glanced sideways. 'Hi, John,' she said softly, almost like she was embarrassed. A couple of her friends were whispering while stealing glances at Shelby.

Interesting. Well, it wasn't interesting that Tamra's friends would treat Shelby like everybody else did. What didn't make sense was why Tamra was being so cold to us, especially since it was Shelby who found Tamra's missing dog.

Although Tamra wasn't the first Lacy to disappoint me. It turned out it was her brother Zane, the first (and so far only) non-Shelby friend I made in New York, who stole her dog. Not surprisingly, after I helped Shelby prove he was the culprit, Zane didn't want to be friends with me any more.

'Excuse me, John?' Mr Crosby was leaning against the wall, Shelby's eyes only centimetres from his shirt.

'Do you think you could help me? It's about time you got to class.'

'Oh, right!' I took Shelby's arm and led her away, despite her protests.

'Something's not right,' Shelby said between clenched teeth.

'Or maybe he's just a regular dude. Not everybody's a criminal mastermind.' I took out my schedule and double-checked what room I was going to.

'Next door on the left,' Shelby remarked. 'I'll be across the hall if you need me.'

'Thanks! Have a good day, Shelby!' I went to open the classroom door, but found it was locked.

'Your other left, Watson,' Shelby said with a grimace. 'And one more thing.'

I stopped, waiting for some words of wisdom from Shelby that would help me navigate this school, just like she had helped me get around my new neighbourhood. Although school was where I could really shine: I was a decent student. I could make friends easily. But Shelby was Shelby, and I'd take any advice from her I could get.

'There's something that teacher is hiding. Mark my words: I'm going to find out what.'

Shelby's face was deadly serious.

Bloomsbury Publishing, London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi and Sydney

First published in Great Britain in January 2018 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3DP

First published in the USA in September 2017 by Bloomsbury Children's Books
1385 Broadway, New York, New York 10018

www.bloomsbury.com

BLOOMSBURY is a registered trademark of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

Text copyright © Elizabeth Eulberg 2017
Illustrations copyright © Matt Robertson 2018

The moral rights of the author and illustrator have been asserted

All rights reserved
No part of this publication may be reproduced or
transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying
or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 1 4088 7149 2

Typeset by Westchester Publishing Services