
Too Late

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For a moment or two I could neither breathe nor move.

Then I felt my fear and unhappiness disappear, as I knew that I was no longer alone in my responsibility for Sir Henry. The dangers all around me did not seem so frightening. The cool voice could belong to only one man in the world. 'Holmes!' I cried. 'Holmes!'

I went outside the hut, and there was Holmes. He was sitting on a stone, and his grey eyes were dancing with amusement. He was thin and worn, but bright and wide awake. His skin was brown from the wind and the sun. But his chin was smooth, and his shirt was white. He did not look like a man who had been living in the middle of the moor.

'I have never been so glad to see anyone in my life,' I said, 'nor so surprised.'

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'I am surprised, too,' Holmes said, as he shook me warmly by the hand. 'How did you find me?'

I told him about Frankland, and how I had seen the boy with the food.

Holmes went into the hut, and looked at the food, and at the note with it. 'I guess that you have been to see Mrs Laura Lyons,' he said, and when I told him that he was right, he went on: 'When we put together everything that each of us has discovered, I expect we shall know almost everything about this case.'

'But how did you get here?' I asked him. 'And what have you been doing? I thought you had to finish your case in London.'

'That is what I wanted you to think,' he said. fast wow gold,

'Then you have tricked me, and have no confidence in me,' I said. I was upset and angry because he had not told me his plans.

'I am sorry if it seems I have tricked you, my dear Watson. I did not want our enemy to know I was here, but I wanted to be near enough to make sure that you and Sir Henry were safe. You are a kind person—too kind to leave me alone out here in bad weather. Our enemy would guess I was here if he saw you coming out with food, or with important news. You have been a very real help to me. Your letters with all their valuable information have been brought to me. You have done excellent work, and without you I would not have all the important details I needed.'

Holmes' warm words of thanks made me feel much happier, and I saw that he was right.

'That's better,' he said, as he saw the shadow lift from my face. 'Now tell me about your visit to Mrs Laura Lyons.'

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I told Holmes everything Mrs Lyons had said.

This is all very important,' Holmes said. 'It answers questions I have been unable to answer. Did you know that Mrs Lyons and Stapleton are very close friends? They often meet, and they write to each other. Perhaps I can use this information to turn Stapleton's wife against him...'

'His wife?' I asked. 'Who and where is she?'

'The lady called Miss Stapleton, who pretends to be his sister, is really his wife,' said Holmes.

'Good heavens, Holmes! cheap aion kinah, Are you sure? If she is his wife, why did Stapleton allow Sir Henry to fall in love with her?' 'Sir Henry hurt nobody except himself when he fell in love with her. Stapleton took care that Sir Henry did not make love to her. I repeat that the lady is his wife, and not his sister. They came here only two years ago, and before that he had owned a school in the north of England. He told you that, and you told me in your letter. I checked on the school, and found that the man who had owned it went away with his wife when the school closed. They changed their name, but the couple who were described to me were without doubt the Stapletons.' 'But why do they pretend to be brother and sister?' I asked. 'Because Stapleton thought that she would be very much more useful to him if she appeared to be a free woman.'

Suddenly I saw behind Stapleton's smiling face a heart with murder in it. 'So he is our enemy! He is the man who followed us in London! And the warning note to Sir Henry came from Miss Stapleton.'

'Exactly,' said Holmes.

'But if Miss Stapleton is really his wife, why is he a close friend of Mrs Laura Lyons?'

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'Your excellent work has given us the answer to that question, Watson. When you told me that Mrs Lyons was getting a divorce, I realized that she hoped to marry Stapleton. He told her that he was unmarried, and that he wanted to make her his wife. When she learns the truth, she may decide to help us. We must go and see her tomorrow.'

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