

# THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

LEVEL 5



## **WORDS USED**

**Story 31**

**Story 32**

**Story 33**

**Story 34**

**Story 35**

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### **KEY WORDS**

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coil  
observe  
serpent  
suspicious  
victim  
weapon

charm  
confuse  
flee  
determine  
opportunity  
scalp

accounting  
ceremony  
female  
independence  
miserable  
risk

grim  
lawyer  
official  
sincere  
undertake  
youth

cheat  
confess  
hygiene  
outfit  
rotten  
various

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### **NECESSARY WORDS**

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baboon  
slither  
speckled  
temper  
viper

assistant  
criminal

deserted  
exist  
expression

guilty  
murder

beggar  
penniless  
suspicion

## THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND



*Dr. Watson and Mr. Holmes look around Julia's bedroom in search of a clue.*

**Preview:**

1. Read the name of the story.
2. Look at the picture.
3. Read the sentence under the picture.
4. Read the first three paragraphs of the story.
5. Then answer the following question.

You learned from your preview that Helen Stoner

- a. is in love with Sherlock Holmes.
- b. is very ill.
- c. believes Dr. Watson is in love with her.
- d. believes her sister has been a victim of a crime.

*Turn to the Comprehension Check on page 10 for the right answer.*

**Now read the story.**

Read to find out what really happened to Julia Stoner.

# THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

My name is Dr. Watson. For many years it has been my pleasure to work as a companion to the world's greatest detective, Sherlock Holmes.

One of Holmes's most famous cases involved a mysterious "speckled band." Holmes and I were having breakfast one morning at his home on Baker Street when a young woman named Helen Stoner arrived.

"Oh please Mr. Holmes, you're the only one who can help me," said Helen. "I believe that my poor sister Julia has been the victim of a terrible crime, but I can't prove it."

Holmes asked the young lady to tell her story. It seemed that her stepfather was a heartless man with a short temper. He didn't want the girls to get married because he would lose the money that their mom had given them when she died. He tried everything he could to keep them at home but, one day, Julia told him she was getting married.

That night, Helen woke up to a terrible scream. She went to her sister's room and saw her lying on the floor. Her sister was gasping for air. She was having trouble breathing.

"It was the speckled band," she whispered to Helen, "the speckled band." A few seconds later she died.

After Helen had told this story, Holmes stood up. He looked very worried. I could tell that he was suspicious.

"Tell me," he said to Helen, "did you see this speckled band?" Helen said she hadn't. "Does your stepfather keep strange animals around the house?" asked Holmes.

"Why yes, he does," said Helen, surprised. "He keeps all kinds of animals around. We even have a baboon on the grounds. Why do you ask?"

"I will explain later," said Holmes. "One more question. Is your stepfather's bedroom next to your sister's?" Helen said it was, and also told us that her stepfather insisted she sleep in Julia's room from now on.

"Hmmm," said Holmes. "That's very odd. I think that Watson and I will come over to your house so I can observe the situation more closely."

As we were leaving, he said to me, "Watson, I believe that you should bring a weapon. I have a feeling this could get dangerous."

Once we arrived at Helen's house, we went right to the bedroom. Holmes observed the bedroom carefully. "Why is this rope here?" he asked, pointing to a rope next to the bed that hung from the ceiling.

"That's the bell rope to call the servants," answered Helen. "But it doesn't work."

Holmes looked at me for a moment, but he didn't say anything. Finally, he spoke.

"Watson and I will sleep here tonight. You must not come into this room for any reason. And whatever you do, don't tell your stepfather that we are here."

Helen looked confused, but she agreed. After she left the room, Holmes said to me, "I guess we'd better get as comfortable as we can. We have a long night ahead. Do you have a weapon?" I showed him my cane. "Good," he said, "give it to me. We have to be completely silent. We can't make the slightest sound."

We sat and waited. I was getting tired. I have to admit that I fell asleep. When I woke up, it was night, and completely dark in the room. I had forgotten that Holmes said to be quiet, and I was about to call his name, when I heard a hiss-

ing sound.

"Watson," Holmes yelled, "Look out!" The lights suddenly went on. Holmes had the cane and was beating something that looked like a coil on the bed. At first, I couldn't tell what it was. Then I realized it was the speckled band. Only it wasn't really a band. It was a snake!

The snake slithered up the bell rope and disappeared. "Quick!" shouted Holmes. "We must hurry!"

We ran out into the hall. Helen had heard the noise and came to see what was going on. Holmes raced past her and opened the door to her stepfather's room. Just then, we heard her stepfather yell, followed by a loud crash.

When we walked in the room, Helen's stepfather was lying on the floor, dead. Helen gave out a cry. "Look," she said, "on his head. It's the speckled band!"

The snake was in a coil around her stepfather's head. "That's no band," said Holmes. "That's a poisonous snake called a viper. Your stepfather trained it to kill your sister, and he was going to use it on you. That's why he put the bell rope in her room, so the speckled serpent could slither down from the ceiling and bite whoever was in the bed. That's also why he wanted you to sleep in her room. He wanted you to be the next victim. Then he could have all the money your mom left you, to himself. But when I attacked it with the cane, the snake got angry and attacked your stepfather instead. After you told me that he kept strange animals, I became suspicious. It was obvious that your sister had been poisoned, and what better way to poison someone than with a deadly serpent!"

And that solved the mystery of the speckled band.

# THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

## COMPREHENSION CHECK

Choose the best answer.

1. Helen Stoner told Sherlock that her stepfather didn't want her or her sister, Julia, to get married because
- a. he didn't want to live alone.
  - b. he didn't like the men they dated.
  - c. he would lose the money that their mother had left them.
  - d. their mother wouldn't like it.

2. First, Helen heard a terrible scream. Next, she ran into her sister's room. Then,
- a. she saw her sister, Julia, lying on the floor.
  - b. she saw her stepfather lying on the floor.
  - c. she saw her mother in the hall.
  - d. she went to see Sherlock Holmes.

3. Before Julia died, she whispered to Helen that
- a. she should get married.
  - b. it was the speckled band.
  - c. it was an accident.
  - d. it was her heart.

4. When Holmes asked Helen about her stepfather, he learned that
- a. he was a kind man.
  - b. he was an ill man.
  - c. he loved his stepdaughters.
  - d. he kept many kinds of animals around the house.

5. In the Stoner home, Sherlock discovered
- a. Julia and her mother.
  - b. the bell rope in Julia's room didn't work.
  - c. the stepfather was a good man.
  - d. there was nothing to worry about.

### Preview Answer:

- d. believes her sister has been a victim of a crime.

6. The speckled band was
- a. a handkerchief.
  - b. a tight rubber band.
  - c. a poisonous snake.
  - d. a group of singers.

7. The snake killed both Julia and
- a. her mother.
  - b. Sherlock Holmes.
  - c. Dr. Watson.
  - d. her stepfather.

8. Helen's stepfather wanted the speckled band to
- a. kill Helen too.
  - b. kill Sherlock.
  - c. go to the zoo.
  - d. stay in the cage.

9. Another name for this story could be
- a. "Breakfast with Sherlock."
  - b. "The Evil Stepfather."
  - c. "The Wedding."
  - d. "Good Luck."

10. This story is mainly about
- a. how to train animals.
  - b. what Sherlock Holmes eats for breakfast.
  - c. what good friends Sherlock and Watson are.
  - d. how and why a young woman died.

Check your answers with the key on page 67.