



## The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

### Adventure VII -- The Five Orange Pips

The story starts with a very literary description of a storm, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

It sees Sir Arthur Conan Doyle reminding us of what a skillful writer he was – not just in terms of narrative but also description, sentence structure and the way he could intersperse short, choppy stories with moments of higher literary form, for example:

‘It was in the latter days of September, and the equinoctial gales had set in with exceptional violence. All day the wind had screamed and the rain had beaten against the windows, so that even here in the heart of great, hand-made London we were forced to raise our minds for the instant from the routine of life, and to recognize the presence of those great elemental forces which shriek at mankind through the bars of his civilization, like untamed beasts in a cage. As evening drew in the storm grew louder and louder, the wind cried and sobbed like a child in the chimney.’

Early on in ‘the pips’ Holmes confirms that Watson is his only friend in response to Watson’s question about whether it is a friend who has come to call in such bad weather. I suppose we all knew Holmes to be otherwise friendless but it is surprisingly poignant to hear him say it.

John Openshaw braves the storm and comes to visit Holmes to relate his unusual tale. He sits in the warm, safe, comforting sitting room at 221b and tells Holmes and Watson about the five orange pips delivered to his uncle and father prior to their deaths. As he has now received the ominous pips himself with the sinister KKK written on the envelope he is rightly afraid and motivated to seek help.

But this is where the story rather departs from the usual Holmes formula. Instead of Holmes being the



Mon père était tombé dans une des crevasses qui abondent aux environs.

hero and saving the day, he sends the young man away to his death. This does give us an opportunity to see Holmes full of emotion as he feels regret and sadness upon hearing the news – ‘It becomes a personal matter with me now’, adding, ‘that he should come to me for help, and that I should send him away to his death – !’ As with the way he felt compelled by his emotions to threaten Mr Windibank the wicked stepfather in A Case of Identity, here again Holmes displays great emotion and caring towards a client. This is very contrary to our usual image of Holmes as the cold, unemotional thinker who could always control his emotions. He was clearly capable of feeling deep sentiments, and from a personal point of view this does make plausible incidents which happen in my own novel.

The ending of ‘the pips’ is also rather unusual as the perpetrators are not caught or even aware that the detective is on their trail as they die at sea. That’s it. The end. Very disappointing if you ask me.

Yes the story does contain some great examples of Holmes’ deduction skills, though not the observing-at-the-scene kind which I personally prefer, but impressive none-the-less. The ending is just too sudden and unsatisfying for me.

**A great start, a ponderous middle, unsatisfactory ending – 5/10.**

**Sorry Sir Arthur, but I did love your storm.**

**Charlotte Anne Walters**

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