



The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle

This is another of the short stories which features in my own novel. And gosh was it hard work to adapt it to what I wanted, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

I spent many a stressful hour going over every detail of the original and trying to keep things largely the same but add my own protagonist into the plot.

In the story, the upper attendant at the Cosmopolitan Hotel steals a precious stone called the blue carbuncle from the countess of Morcar who is staying there. He causes a little damage in the room and sends for a plumber – John Horner – who has a previous conviction for robbery, and then blames him for the theft. Throw in the complication of how he then escapes with the stone and hides it by forcing a Christmas goose to swallow it and you have a very jolly, neat, tale.

All I had to do was make my central character, Red, the one who steals the stone while trying to keep everything else the same. Sounds simple? Well, it took days. But I have to say that the end result is one of my favourite parts of the novel and has kept some of the humour of the original too. And boy, did the original make me laugh at times.

The Blue Carbuncle contains what I believe to be one of the funnies lines in all the Holmes stories, not least because it wasn't intentional. When Holmes finally apprehends Ryder, he brings him back to 221B and must surely be simply dying to hear his story but takes an unexpected pause – 'You look cold, Mr Ryder. Pray take the basket chair. I will just put on my slippers before we settle this little matter of yours.' Maybe



it's just my singular sense of humour but I read that and laughed so hard tears rolled down my cheeks. "I'll just go and put my slippers on," is like something my Nan would have said, not the world's greatest consulting detective.

Holmes concludes the adventure by saying to Watson – "If you have the goodness to touch the bell, Doctor, we will begin another investigation, in which also a bird will be the chief feature." Doyle put much humour into his writing and I do think this is often, sadly, overlooked.

The Blue Carbuncle also contains a perfect example of the science of deduction at its best. Holmes examines an old hat and deduces from it that the wearer is of high intelligence, was once rather well-to-do but has since fallen on hard times, his wife no longer loves him and he has gas laid on in his house. It's simply brilliant and at first the reader is as baffled as Watson but once the reasoning is explained it is so simple. Such as with the pocket Watch analysis in the Sign of Four, so much is gained from so little. It is this 'science' which makes Holmes so different to other fictional detectives and makes him such a fascinating character.

Holmes' social isolation is further reinforced in this story. Except for Watson's visit he is alone at Christmas. Peterson the commissionaire does visit on Christmas Day but only because he needs Holmes' help.

The story is another example of how Holmes exercises his own unique sense of justice. He listens to Ryder's story (once he has put his slippers on) and decides to let him go. To have that level of assurance in your own judgement shows a high level of self-confidence. It also demonstrates just how separately Holmes operates from the official police. This combines to give the overall impression of someone independent, a touch eccentric and very much their own man. These are the very attributes that have always drawn me to Holmes as a character.

A great little story with brilliant deduction and humour – 8 out of 10.

Charlotte Anne Walters

September 26, 2011