



Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes Adventure IX -- The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle

SUMMARY (Diogenes Club)

Watson is married. He stops in to see Holmes two days after Christmas and finds him examining a felt hat which was given to him by Peterson.

Late Christmas eve, Peterson was walking home. He saw Baker approaching from the opposite direction carrying a goose. Baker was assaulted by a band of ruffians and in defending himself with his walking stick, broke a large shop window. This frightened both Baker and the thugs who fled. Peterson retrieved Baker's goose and hat and brought them to Holmes. Holmes kept the hat to examine it and Peterson took the goose home to cook it.

When Peterson's wife was dressing the goose, she found the blue carbuncle in its crop. Peterson brought the stone to Holmes. Holmes traced the stone from Baker to Windigate to Breckenridge to Oakshot and discovered the following plot.

Cusack told Ryder about the stone. Ryder arranged to have Homer come and fix a minor problem in the Countess' room. After he left, Ryder took the stone and went to visit his sister. Ryder was sure that Homer would be charged with the theft because of his past record. He forced the stone down a goose to avoid being discovered in possession of it, but then retrieved the wrong goose from the flock and so the stone and goose went to market.

After confessing, Ryder was allowed to go free by Holmes and the stone was returned to the countess. Holmes forgave Ryder in the spirit of the season and because he was convinced Ryder would not go wrong again.



SUMMARY (ACD Encyclopedia)

While going home, Peterson, the commissionaire, is witnessing a fight between a man and thugs. In the fight, the man loses his hat and a goose. At the sight of the uniform of Peterson, everyone flees, leaving the hat and goose on the floor.

Holmes advises him to eat the goose and give him the hat, from which he deduces that he belongs to a Mr. Henry Baker. While cooking the goose, Peterson's wife discovers a priceless gem in the crop of the bird. The very stone stolen from the Countess of Morcar a few days ago at the Cosmopolitan Hotel.

John Horner, a plumber who was working at the hotel, was accused of the theft and arrested on the testimony of James Ryder, the chief of staff. Holmes publishes an ad in the newspapers to find Mr. Henry Baker.

He succeeds to trace back the history of the goose until the provider and finds James Ryder, the real thief of the stone. He lets Ryder leave the country but Horner could be released because of the lack of evidence. The carbuncle is returned to the Countess and Peterson receives a reward of £1,000.

SUMMARY (Wikipedia)

A "Blue Carbuncle" is stolen from a hotel suite, and a former felon is soon arrested. However, an acquaintance of Holmes discovers the carbuncle in the throat of a Christmas goose. Holmes traces the owner of the goose, but soon determines that he was not the thief by offering him a replacement goose. The detective continues his search, first to an inn and then a dealer in Covent Garden. The dealer refuses to provide Holmes with information about the source of the goose, but Holmes observes another man trying to find the same information, and confronts him. The man, the head attendant at the hotel, confesses to his crime. Holmes allows him to remain free, arguing that prison could make him a hardened criminal later.

As London prepares for Christmas, newspapers report the theft of a near-priceless gemstone, the "Blue Carbuncle", from the hotel suite of the Countess of Morcar. The police arrest John Horner, a plumber with a criminal record who was in Countess's room repairing a fireplace.

In Baker Street, Watson finds Holmes contemplating a battered old hat brought to him by Peterson, a commissionaire, who seeks Holmes's help in returning the hat to its rightful owner, along with a Christmas

goose. Both had been dropped in the street during a scuffle. Although the goose bears a tag with the name Henry Baker, there is little hope of finding an owner with such a common name. Peterson takes the goose home for dinner, and Holmes keeps the hat to study as an intellectual exercise.

Peterson returns excited, carrying the stolen gem, and reports that he found it in the goose's crop. Holmes closely studies the hat and its condition, deducing Henry Baker's age, social standing, intellect, and domestic status. When Baker appears in response to advertisements that Holmes places in the London newspapers, Holmes offers him a new goose. Happily accepting the replacement bird, Baker declines to take away the original bird's entrails, convincing Holmes that he knew nothing about the gem. He tells Holmes that he had purchased the goose at the Alpha Inn, a pub near the British Museum.

Holmes and Watson visit the pub, where the proprietor informs them that the bird was purchased from a Covent Garden dealer. The dealer there refuses to help, complaining of the pestering he has endured recently about geese purchased by the Alpha Inn. Holmes, realising that he is not the only one aware of the goose's importance, tricks the irate man into revealing that the bird was supplied to him by its breeder, Mrs Oakshott of Brixton. A trip to Brixton proves unnecessary when the dealer's other "pesterer" appears – James Ryder, head attendant at the hotel where the gem was stolen.

Back in Baker Street, Ryder admits that he and his accomplice, the Countess's maid, had contrived to frame Horner, believing that his criminal past would make him an easy scapegoat. During a visit to his sister – Mrs Oakshott – Ryder had hit on the idea of feeding the gem to a goose she had promised him as a gift. Unfortunately, Ryder then took away the wrong bird, confusing his goose with another in the flock. By the time he realised his mistake, the other had already been sold.

Ryder sobs convulsively. Holmes takes pity on the man and allows him to flee, having concluded that he has been far too frightened by the episode to offend again. Also, it was the season of forgiveness. Horner can expect to be freed as the case against him must now collapse.