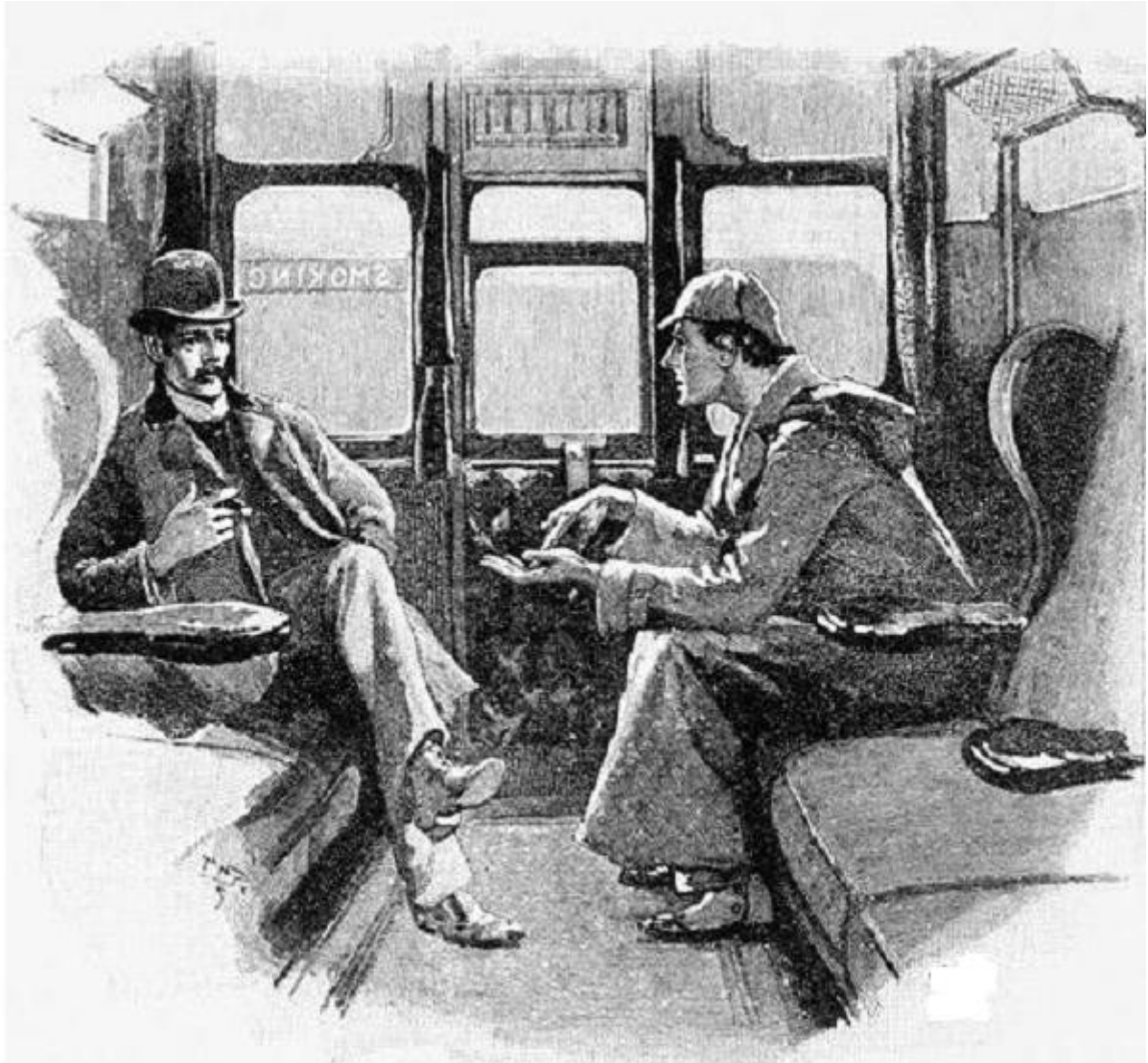


The Tomato Sauce Case



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Dear Reader,

What follows is Dr Watson's account of Sherlock Holmes's solution of the "The Tomato Sauce Case". Holmes solves this bizarre mystery on the train whilst journeying to the scene! Can you match the deductive reasoning of Sherlock Holmes and solve it, too? (All Holmes needed were the clues given here at the beginning). After arriving at the scene, Holmes cleverly leads his suspect to reveal, all unawares, his involvement and so to the surprise ending of the mystery. Finally, Holmes explains the sequence of events that started and ended with tomato sauce!

"Trifles, Watson, trifles," murmured Holmes in a monotone, with eyes closed and his slender body slumped languidly in the corner of the seat. "You know how trifles amuse me."

"Indeed I do, Holmes, but is it a mere trifle that brought you knocking on my door at 5 a.m. and now finds us in this first-class carriage, flying along, *en route* to the casino's roulette tables?"

Holmes smiled and laughed softly yet within a moment his eyes were wide and staring as he uttered excitedly, "Yes, Watson, that's it! A mere trifle!"

"Good grief, Holmes, what, may I ask, is *it*?"

The sudden change in Holmes's demeanour was not unknown to me. I had seen it many times before. One moment he would be a sleeping dog, the next, a greyhound straining in the slips and the reason for this instant transformation would prove to be the solution of yet another mystery.

"Before this day ends, Watson, you will have another unusual chapter to add to your casebook. What I know of the event that has brought us on this early morning journey I will now share with you. Inspector Lestrade is in charge of the investigation and knowing my interest in the bizarre sent his man with a message:

'At 2 a.m. this very night, Mr John Dudley, the manager of the Triple Seven Casino, heard a pistol shot and thought it came from the garden next to his office. He sent for his security guard, Mr Mayne, with orders to arm himself and come immediately so that they might then enter the grounds to seek the cause of the disturbance. Dudley extinguished his office light and waited for Mayne to arrive. About a minute later, a second shot was heard coming from the garden. Shortly after, Mayne arrived and he and Dudley

then entered the garden through a door in the office bay window. Hardly were they through the door than the moonlight revealed a man's body on the lawn. Blood oozing from a chest wound indicated he had been shot through the heart. Inspector Lestrade arrived and began his investigation. The victim was identified as Thomas Smith and found upon him were a pocket-watch, a latchkey and notes amounting to eighty-five pounds. No weapon was found near the body and darkness prevented a wider search. 'What do you make of that, Watson?'

"Hmm, a fairly straightforward case, likely motive: robbery. The large amount of money found on the victim does not preclude robbery. The robber may have fled because of activity within the manager's office. Sad though murder always is, this case seems of academic interest only. But what, Holmes, was the bizarre thing that Inspector Lestrade thought would interest you?"

"Tomato sauce!"

"Tomato sauce? What has tomato sauce got to do with it?"

"Everything, Watson, everything! As you would expect, the front of the victim's shirt was red with the blood issuing from the fatal wound. But upon closer examination it was found that the blood contributed only a minor part of the red stain. The larger portion of the stain saturating the area of the wound was tomato sauce!"

"Tomato sauce! If it weren't for the horror of the death it would be laughable. That is truly bizarre."

"With that extra evidence, Watson, what is your assessment now?"

"Holmes, please, it is impossible to assess. A forensic analysis of the scene will be needed. Of course, I see why you are excited. Tomato sauce certainly adds relish to the case if you will pardon the pun but that complication must confuse even you."

"On the contrary, Watson, a simple yet intriguing case. One in which logical thought applied to the known facts proved to be sufficient rather

than the acquirement of additional evidence that would be superfluous. Hence, why tomato sauce proved sufficient to solve the case."

"You've solved it? That is unbelievable. Though I know your incredible powers of deduction how could tomato sauce provide the solution?"

"Come, Watson, this case is a trifle, a mere trifle, but I would rather you work it out than I should tell you. Perhaps, after examining the body you, too, will solve the case."

"But, Holmes, you haven't seen the body. How did you solve the case?"

"Elementary, my dear Watson!"

Can you match Sherlock Holmes and solve the case here and now?

Just before daybreak we arrived at the scene of the tragedy and met Lestrade in the casino manager's office. The Inspector's review of the case added little to his earlier communication. "A bungled armed robbery, perhaps, leading to an unfortunate death. It has been too dark to examine the body. Come daylight, that will be done, as will a search for the weapon, though I hardly think a robber would have thrown it away."

"So, you have ruled out suicide, Inspector?" asked Holmes.

"Ha ha! There were two shots and no pistol was found near the body. I think we can dismiss suicide."

"Perhaps, but I recommend a search in the vicinity of the victim."

"Surely, Holmes," Lestrade scoffed sarcastically, "you are not suggesting Smith suicided and *then* threw the pistol into the bushes!"

"Nevertheless, Inspector, now that daylight is about to enable your man to search the grounds, I suggest it may prove expeditious and fruitful to begin in the proximity of the victim.

"Go, look for it," ordered Lestrade, turning to a policeman, who quickly went into the garden through the bay window door. Lestrade continued, "Shortly, Mr Dudley will attend us for questioning."

"In the few questions I will put to him, Inspector, I ask you to indulge me a whim. It would assist me greatly if you would support my argument even though you may hold the contrary view or even know a remark to be false."

"Ye gods! You never cease to astound me, Holmes, but that is ridiculous."

Quickly, I responded, "Inspector, I have known Holmes to apply this unorthodox method in only a very few cases but with remarkable success. Though I have no idea what he has in mind I ask that you accede to his request." Nevertheless, it still took me by surprise and filled me with a keen sense of anticipation and wonderment as to what Holmes must have in mind.

"Very well, then, Mr Holmes, proceed as you intend."

"Thank you, Inspector. Meanwhile, perhaps Dr Watson might be permitted to examine the body."

"If you would be so kind, Dr Watson, it would be most helpful," said Lestrade.

"Leave the bay windows open, Watson, and you will still be able to partake of our discussions and share with us your post-mortem findings," said Holmes.

The policeman, holding a pistol, re-entered the room. "Found it!" he said, placing the pistol on the table.

A minute or so later, Dudley arrived and after formal introductions Holmes began. He immediately applied his unique method, his first remark being a complete fabrication, "A pistol has been found in the bushes and on examination revealed the fingerprints of Mr Smith, the deceased."

There had been no time to analyse this or hardly anything else, yet it was by such *inventions* that Holmes sought the truth.

He continued, "Of course, if Mr Smith had struggled with a robber his fingerprints might appear upon the pistol. However, it is the Inspector's view, and mine, too, that a robber would not throw his pistol away with his fingerprints on it to identify him. I say, therefore, there was no robbery!"

How, then, did Mr Smith's fingerprints arrive upon the pistol? Suicide, perhaps. If we assume suicide, how did the pistol get into the bushes? It had to be thrown there. But by whom? Someone who preferred to conceal a suicide even though it would bring a pall of murder over the community and fear that the killer lurked among them. However, in addition to the victim's fingerprints the pistol discloses another set of prints. It is proposed that all casino staff be fingerprinted to find the owner of those prints."

Dudley's shoulders sagged noticeably. "Inspector Lestrade and you, too, Mr Holmes, I have a confession. It was me. I threw the pistol into the bushes."

"Tell us all, if you please, Mr Dudley."

"After hearing the first shot I turned off the light so as not to offer myself as a possible target for the gunman and then settled to wait quietly for Mr Mayne to arrive. After the second shot I looked through the window and saw a body with a pistol in its hand lying motionless on the lawn. I went into the garden in case he was alive and that I might offer aid. He appeared to be dead. But why dead at my door? Suddenly I was filled with dread. Had this patron gambled away his life savings and come to my door to take his life? I thought of the unfavourable publicity following such a disclosure. In an endeavour to conceal such a possibility I took a handful of money from my pocket and stuffed it into his pockets. Thus he would appear to be a big winner who had died at the hands of a robber. Nothing could bring back the dead man, so I wrenched the pistol from his grasp and quickly threw it into the bushes. I realise it was wrong but that is what happened."

"Ah!" said Lestrade. "It seems you were right about suicide after all, Holmes."

"Inspector, I think we ought to hear from Dr Watson before the case is concluded. Watson! If you please, join us in a minute or two," called Holmes. "Dr Watson has been busy examining the body in general and the fatal wound in particular as bullet wounds hold a fascination for him. But before I ask Dr Watson to present his final analysis I will refer to his initial examination that found two bullets lodged in the victim's heart. This leads to the highly pertinent question. How can Smith have suicided by shooting himself twice in the heart? No! No! It will not do! What, Mr Dudley, took

place between the time you heard the first shot and the time you hurled the pistol into the bushes? Come now! The truth will out!"

Dudley answered dejectedly, "You have found me out, Mr Holmes. When I was about to throw the pistol into the bushes, it occurred to me that a person with two bullets in the heart could not be mistaken for a suicide. With that thought in mind I aimed the pistol at the earlier wound and pulled the trigger. Then I threw the pistol into the bushes."

"Let us understand you, Mr Dudley. You said, before, you went to the victim after you heard the second shot. You are now saying you went to the victim after you heard the first shot and that it was you who fired the second shot into the heart of Mr Smith. Is that true?"

"Yes, Mr Holmes, that is the truth."

"Mr Dudley, on this piece of paper write 'I fired a bullet into the heart of Mr Smith.' and sign it."

"Well, that seems to have completely cleared the picture," said Lestrade. "Undoubtedly, Mr Dudley will have to face the courts and be censured for interfering with evidence but I doubt he will incur a penalty."

Dudley signed the paper and handed it to Holmes whereupon Holmes pointed an accusing finger at Dudley and exclaimed dramatically, "There is the killer, Inspector," and, waving the paper triumphantly above his head, added, "and here is his signed confession!"

"But, but, bu...", was all the flabbergasted Lestrade could utter. Dudley, though, was laughing uproariously.

"That is ridiculous. One cannot kill somebody who is already dead."

"Ha ha, that's right, Holmes," joined in the delighted Lestrade.

"Watson, would you kindly give us your appraisal of the wounds sustained by the victim?" said Holmes.

"Certainly. The victim died as the result of a bullet fired into the heart at close range."

"And what of a second bullet in the heart?"

"There was none, Holmes, only the single fatal shot."

"That cannot be," spluttered Dudley. "He was dead when I shot him."

"No, Mr Dudley, he was not dead," said Holmes.

"But I saw the blood - the massive wound."

"That was not blood! That was tomato sauce!"

"Ah, the tomato sauce! I had forgotten the tomato sauce," murmured Lestrade.

"What has tomato sauce got to do with it?" asked the puzzled Dudley.

"Everything, Mr Dudley, everything!" said Holmes and turning to Lestrade, "An interesting case, Inspector. I look forward to our next merry meeting."

"But are you leaving already, Mr Holmes?" said Lestrade, "Won't you please tell us u... u... ah Mr Dudley how you worked it out?"

"As you wish, Inspector. Mr Dudley knew nothing of the tomato sauce, as you and I did, and so an explanation is appropriate for his benefit. The case is quite simple, as are most tragedies, and its mundane details will be dealt with in due course. But to the event and its inevitable progress leading to Mr Smith's death. Smith, having lost his money in the casino, thought of a ruse by which he might recoup some of his losses. In the very early hours after midnight, when unlikely to be disturbed by others, he went to the garden next to Mr Dudley's office. After ensuring that Mr Dudley was within, he used tomato sauce to daub his shirt in the region of his heart.

He then lay on the lawn near Mr Dudley's office door and fired a shot into the air. Thus did he seek to fake his death by suicide. A few moments later Mr Dudley came to him and deposited a considerable sum of money into his pockets and then took the pistol from his hand. One can imagine the satisfaction Smith probably felt at this moment that his plan was succeeding. Had Mr Dudley now returned to his office, Smith would most assuredly have jumped up and run away with his booty. However, such was

not to be, for fate had set another course! Within a few seconds Mr Dudley was bending over Smith and looking at the puddle of tomato sauce on his chest. Even in a good light he very likely would have mistaken the sauce for blood. In the event, regardless of what he saw in the moonlight, he thought it was a fatal bullet wound. He aimed the pistol at the centre of the sauce stain and pulled the trigger, shooting Smith in the heart and killing him.

Now, we must away. Good morning, Inspector. Come, Watson, if we hurry we will have time for a pie and tomato sauce in the railway buffet and still catch the 8.15 to Paddington."