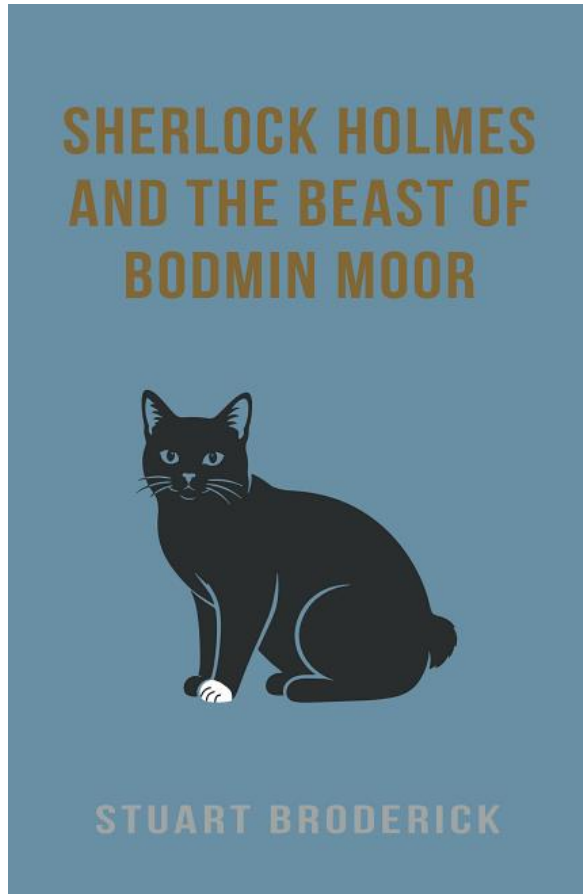




This is the Story of Sherlock Holmes and his encounter with Lieutenant Elizabeth O'Malley, the Interstellar Sheriff and commander of Imperial Saucer Kearsarge.

Sherlock Holmes and the Beast of Bodmin Moor

By Stuart Broderick

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SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE BEAST OF BODMIN MOOR



STUART BRODERICK

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The door squeaked open, and Mrs. Hudson peered in with a toothy smile. “Miss Elizabeth O’Mally and her escort Vincent Fitzgerald are here to see you Mr. Holmes. They hail from the United States, Seattle no less and have traveled all this way to seek an audience with you.”

Mrs. Hudson moved aside as a shockingly beautiful woman with long auburn hair and sparkling green eyes stepped in. Her intelligent and excited face, tempered by a strong air of curiosity, left Holmes momentarily frozen. She wore a long black dress with a high collar topped with grey lace and two rows of gold buttons running down her chest. The only adornment on her person was an impossibly large emerald colored brooch that perfectly matched the hue of her eyes. He suspected that any jewel so large was likely a paste until the sunlight caught it, sending green beams magically dancing about. Despite wearing neither makeup nor other jewelry she was anything but plain. Her black and red frilled hat was the latest in New York fashion, but while her attire was perfect, something about the cloth escaped him. She was followed by her male companion wearing a fine new buckskin coat and denim trousers. His footwear was typical of the American west, but again, the make of his shoes and weave of the denim was amiss. With their queer appearance piquing his interest but no answers available, Holmes found himself out of sorts. “Please have a seat Miss O’Mally,” he said, gesturing to a pair of chairs. “How may I help you?”

She smiled and cocked her head slightly while looking first to Dr. Watson before addressing Holmes. “I have come to request your discreet assistance. I need you to locate someone. The person that

I seek is very small, perhaps four feet tall and slightly built. He may be disguised as a child or perhaps a very petite woman. I require only that you find the man and report his location back to me.”

“So,” Holmes prodded. “You sail halfway across the globe in search of a midget. May I ask why you haven’t contacted the police?”

“As I stated, I am in need of discreet assistance, that’s precisely why I am here today. Your reputation proceeds you Mr. Holmes, and as I stated I do not want authorities involved.”

Holmes paused, waiting for the young lady to keep talking, but she sat motionless. Her piercing green eyes left him mesmerized. “Your request for me to simply locate and not apprehend this individual indicates that you seek a very dangerous man, midget or not. I will require significantly more information before I can consider moving forward. Firstly, I am most intrigued by your accent. It is like none other I have encountered in all my travels. I am quite familiar with the dialects of western North America, but yours is somehow different. Additionally, may I inquire as to what could cause you to come such a vast distance in search of this person?”

“You are correct in your assessment of my accent, Mr. Holmes. We hail from a remote community some distance outside of Seattle. As to the reason for my pursuit of this individual, I unfortunately must decline to say. Any information that I’m able to convey would be strictly confidential and only released on what I might describe as a need to know basis. I am willing to compensate you handsomely for your services. Would twice your standard fee suffice?”

Holmes surveyed Fitzgerald, studying his guest's footwear, then sat back in his chair with his arms crossed. "Unfortunately, Miss O'Mally, I am quite busy at this time. I must decline your request."

She stopped and waited for the room to be engulfed with an uncomfortable silence. "May I offer four times your standard rate Mr. Holmes?"

Holmes looked away from his disturbingly beautiful guest and again studied her companion, who stared blankly at the far wall. "My fees are set and I do not vary them, except on those occasions where I have seen fit to waive my charges. As I stated, my schedule does not currently afford the time. May I refer you to inspector Graham Lestrade of Scotland Yard?"

O'Mally popped to her feet and gestured at Vincent, who rose and held the door for her. She turned with an odd smile before departing. "Please reconsider. Good day gentlemen."

The latch closed with a deliberate click and two pairs of leather soled shoes ambled down the creaky staircase. Watson huffed and shook, glaring at Holmes. "Are you daft man?" he demanded. "That woman is in obvious distress and came seeking your services. Has that cocaine finally destroyed your faculties? I need not remind you that our coffers are rather low. Why did you turn her away?"

"What do you make of those two?" Holmes asked.

"Fitzgerald and Miss O'Mally are typical wealthy Americans, more than capable of paying their bill. They were quite well appointed."

"Too well attired," Holmes snapped back. "They wore garments fresh from the tailors. The stiffness in the cloth indicates they had

dressed mere hours ago. Despite that outlandishly large emerald, those were not the clothes of people who would keep an unworn set in their steamer trunk.”

“You still haven’t answered my question Holmes, why did you not take the job?”

“I refused to assist that woman for one simple reason. I am accustomed to wondering what I may encounter at the conclusion of my investigations. With her I know nothing about the situation from the beginning. If I am unaware of my investigation’s starting point, how could I possibly navigate my way to its end?”

Watson stuffed his pipe with a fine blend of Turkish and American tobacco. His face glowed in the light as flame engulfed his match and was drawn into the bowl. Smoke poured from his nostrils until it occluded his entire head. He then sucked a long draw and blew three perfect smoke rings. “Come now Holmes, despite her extraordinary beauty I find Miss O’Mally remarkably unremarkable, other than the fact that she is a spinster. For such a stunningly beautiful woman to have no husband at her age leads me to the conclusion that she,”

“She is a Sapphist.”

“The medical term is lesbian Holmes. Not much else going on between those lovely earlobes if you ask me. Now as to her companion, I found that man to be an interesting subject. I surmise he is of a military bearing, perhaps a medical man of sorts. He obviously suffers from a form of combat fatigue. I’ve seen that thousand-yard stare far too many times. Note that he spoke not a word, perhaps a case of hysterical dumbness. He appears to have

suffered at least three distinct sets of injuries over roughly the past six months, most recently a few days ago.”

Holmes stroked his long fingers through his hair. “Thank you for the assessment of Fitzgerald. I noticed what appeared to be bruising on his forehead and wrists, but your medical opinion is three incidents spread out over a period of several months. As to your diagnosis of combat fatigue, do you believe he served during the Spanish war?”

“No, I’d say he’s been out of the service for years. He more likely served in the Indian wars. However, it is typically those conflicts not officially reported that tend to damage men the worst. It galls me to no end when a military establishment declares a man to be of low moral fiber or worse yet a coward for succumbing to the horrors of modern warfare. Those same officers would never consider abandoning an artillery piece or horse on the battlefield, yet they treat the soldiers under their command like some resource to be burned up like gunpowder. As for Miss O’Mally, if that is indeed her name, I find her at best somewhat dim witted.”

“I am sufficiently confident that Elizabeth O’Mally is indeed her name, and she does hail from Seattle. Those are the only things about her of which I have any small degree of certainty. Everything else, any nuance that might describe her is all part of an elaborate ruse. She is lying even when she tells the truth yet tells the truth while lying. That accent is beyond obtuse. The syntax and pattern of her speech is unlike anything I’ve yet encountered. Much like one of those Russian nesting dolls, with her there is always another layer buried beneath that which is observable. I have never encountered a woman so cunning. She is at once a masterful

seductress, a forceful authoritarian and a damsel in distress. I am forced to admit that I find myself perplexed. Something is wrong and I know not what.”

Watson crossed the room and looked out the window. “I found nothing unusual with her voice. In fact, she sounded quite sweet fitting for such a gorgeous young woman. You stated that her appearance was too perfect and their clothes so new they drew your attention. Precisely what did you mean by that?”

“It was the cloth itself that first struck me, perhaps an unusual pattern in the weave of the fabric that I find myself unable to decipher. Her appearance was abnormally flawless and while her radiant beauty may be explained by natural phenomenon, something was out of place. I almost felt as if a static charge enveloped her presence, that may account for the strange perfume she wore. She smelled of roses and lilac, with an almost undetectable aroma similar to that of electrical transformers. No Watson, she is not simple minded but rather playing what the Americans call ‘country dumb.’ Fitzgerald clearly is clearly a man of substantial means, yet he defers to her as if she were his military superior. If he indeed was a soldier as you say how could a woman possibly rise to any such position? This leads me to the conclusion that Miss O’Mally is most likely a spy or criminal associate of Professor Moriarity, perhaps both. Beyond the fact that she represents incalculable trouble, I find no frame of reference by which I may judge that woman.”

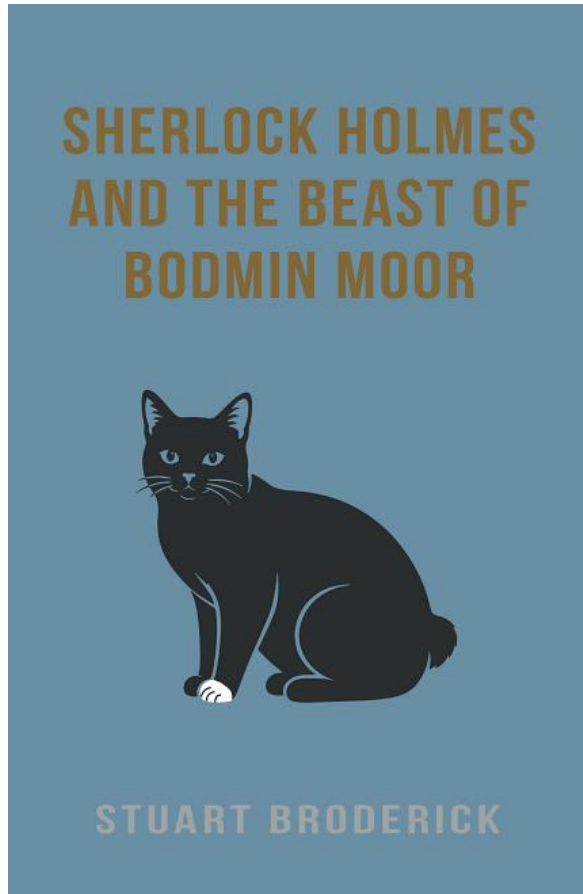
Watson spun on his heel, closed one eye and raised his pipe to eye level, nodding. “That could explain why she brought Fitzgerald along. It begs the question of why she wanted you to merely find

this midget and report his location. Was it in concern for our safety, or rather an opportunity to exact some murderous revenge? Her insistence that the authorities not be involved leads me to concur with your assessment. She may well have nefarious intentions. However, if she is all that you say, why did she give up so easily?”

“Elementary my dear Watson. Miss O’Mally hasn’t given up, she has changed tactics. We have definitely not seen the last of those two.”

Watson turned and looked out the window. “Amazing. London was buried the worst smog of the summer, then along comes that unseasonal thunderstorm and now it’s as clear a bluebird day as any man should desire. As the old saying goes, everyone complains about the weather, but nobody ever does anything about it.”

“Nobody except Elizabeth O’Mally.” Holmes grumbled.



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