



The Locked Room

Michael Soares, Grade 8

I hammered Mr. Holmes's residence until he stumbled and opened the door.

"Watson, why are you here this time of day?" he stumbled over his words.

"It's four to one sir." Mr. Holmes had chaotic hair that could house a family of birds. His eyes were bloodshot from endless hours of working. He had on wrinkled light blue striped pajamas. But he insisted upon me coming in. As I entered, I stumbled upon a mountain of books and papers that barricaded the doorway. His dorm was an absolute mess as if a tornado had gone through. He led me to his working station and asked me to assist him with a new case that had arisen.

"Aaron Macdonald was murdered?!" I exclaimed.

"A man of such prominence had it coming."

"You shouldn't say such things. He has greatly helped with modern industrialization." Aaron Macdonald and his brother, William Macdonald, were the owners of a large oil mining company. The oil had been utilized in various forms of machinery. One invention was the crop harvester. Mr. William Macdonald was the genius behind it. Both of the brothers were extremely wealthy.

"Watson, what'd you say? Shall we head to the scene?" He threw his brown trench coat over his shoulders.

Upon our arrival, a young woman, wearing a black gown, exited the colossal home. Tears rolled down her blushed cheeks as she greeted us with a grimace.

"Thank you for coming on such a short notice Mr. Holmes."

"My pleasure, could you please escort us to the scene of the crime?"

"Of course, this way please," she wiped away her tears. Mrs. Macdonald led us across winding halls and numerous rooms on our way to the bathroom. There, I gazed at the pale, unmoving body of Aaron Macdonald. His eyes were cold on mine. I couldn't help but feel that his glare was piercing through my soul like a shining silver blade. I stiffened. The silence in the room was deafening.

"Hmm," Mr. Sherlock Holmes pondered, "the body looks fresh." I contemplated possible murder methods. *Could it have been a poison?* Mr. Holmes bent down and widened the victim's mouth. He was analyzing anything that could have obstructed the victim's airway.

"It was definitely poison."

"Could it have been a suicide?"

"Possibly, but it depends on if he expressed anything that would have caused such an affluent man to act in such a preposterous manner." He glanced at me and told me to gather all suspects who had come in contact with Mr. Macdonald.

"Mrs. Macdonald, where were you with your husband in his last thirty minutes?"

"I was at dinner."

"Did any topic of discussion come up that would spark aggression?"

"Why, yes. We discussed how he should move on with his company. I brought up the idea of mining cleaner materials that would fuel the new gadgetry. He disagreed and stormed out of the room."

"Could there have been a harmful chemical in his food? Because there were no signs of struggle."

"The only chemical that would take five to ten minutes to kill him would be cyanide," Mrs. Macdonald replied. I paused. I examined the room as Mr. Holmes continued to question

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Mrs. Macdonald, and I came across something quite fascinating: a record of all of Mrs. Macdonald's studies of chemistry. I handed it to Mr. Holmes as he jotted down information into his red, leather notepad.

"Okay, thank you Mrs. Macdonald. If you don't mind, I would like to interview your children."

"Of course." At that moment, the widow bellowed for her children. A young lad trotted through the door. His platinum hair fell to his ears. He held his chin high, as if he were a king. Synchronously, a girl of the same age shuffled into the living room. She wore two glistening, symmetrical red bows and, unlike her brother, every stride that she took was filled with uncertainty. She stared at the grey carpeting, and stood in silence.

"Johnathan, Amanda, please greet Mr. Holmes and Mr. Watson." Jonathan snickered and swung his head aside as Amanda waved lumberingly.

"Jonathan and Amanda," Mr. Holmes began to question them, "can you please tell me what rumbles arose during dinner?"

Jonathan began to speak, "Well, mother and father argued over business, as usual, and they left the dinner table. Before my sister and I go to check on them, our mother comes back in tears, and, as it turns out, our father is deceased."

"Is there anyone else who has had an altercation with your father before?"

"Uncle William has had disputes with father about investing in real estate to further increase the company's value."

When it was finally time to part ways, we thanked Mrs. Macdonald for her hospitality, and we started towards Mr. William Macdonald's residence.

He towered over us and cast a shadow across the city. He held a large wooden cane in his left hand and greeted us with a wide grin.

"You must be Mr. Holmes, I've heard a great load about you," his voice was chilling, and each breath he took shook the ground. He invited us into his humble abode. The household was miniscule and resembled that of a Hobbit.

"So, Mr. Macdonald, I've been told that you're one to quarrel with your brother."

"Nonsense, Aaron and I are acquainted pleasantly."

"Then, I presume you wouldn't mind explaining the recent argument between you and your brother?"

"Ah, yes, Aaron was quite a pain. He would not agree with any idea that I proposed, but he was still my brother, and I cared for him. However, he was much of a nuisance to my business."

Mr. Holmes and I exchanged fearful glances. It seemed as though this man was not what he appeared to be. Suddenly, Mr. Macdonald's expression altered. He stuck his hand under the table. A sudden *click* and *sssss* like the sound of compressed air being released. Suddenly, the world turned to a void of gloomy clouds and dark fog.

We woke up to the stench of alloy drenching our lungs. The frigid floor made me quiver. The room was made of rusted, metal plates that were bolted together with thick nails. In a corner, there was a desk that had been endlessly beaten and decayed, and on top of it laid a filthy vase of yellow chrysanthemums. Sherlock tugged on the drawers, but neither of them opened. On one of the walls, there was a black telephone that looked as if it had been polished thoroughly and three corroded levers that had been recently coated with paint: a silver, white, and black one. Mr. Holmes attempted to open the door, but it was sealed shut. So, I frantically scampered towards

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the telephone and attempted to dial the police, but the dial wheel was locked. All of a sudden, the telephone started to ring.

“Hello, who is this?” I was sweating profusely and I could barely breathe

“You have five hours to exit the bunker, ” the voice of a woman spoke on the other line, “Otherwise, carbon monoxide will overflow the room, and you will collapse. Unlike with the nitrous oxide, you will not survive this time.” Dread flooded my body as I crippled to the floor.

“Don’t fret, Watson, this is a simple puzzle. We simply need to find any clues as to how we could escape.” We scaled the wall for any openings, for gas to flow through, but our effort was useless. Out of the blue, I was drawn to a small piece of paper that was placed perfectly in the centre of the desk. In large letters there was “MCMXXXI”, it was quite obviously roman numerals. I scanned the room for anywhere that I could enter the digits. Handily, a safe with a numeric lock had been placed exactly an inch between both desk legs.

“Mr. Holmes, come look at this!”

His eyes glistened with amazement as he saw me enter “1931” into the padlock. The safe unlocked, and inside was a bright, bronze key to the desk drawer that was previously closed shut. *This must have been made by a child! It is too simple.* There was another exquisitely situated note that was coloured in the pattern of white, silver, then black. Mr. Holmes flipped the levers in the order stated on the paper. The ground trembled as two walls separated into a separate chamber. On a small, burnished table, was a silver key. I turned the frozen key very gently. Inside of the drawer was an instruction to lift the vase of chrysanthemums. With precision, I elevated the vase briskly above my head and a rope followed the bottom.

“Mr. Holmes, hold your breath!” I threw him to the ground with a thud at the sound of the hissing. The carbon monoxide was as sly as a predator attempting to catch its prey. The broad, steel door slowly opened, and we were able to make it through. We ascended a lengthy flight of stairs that lead to an oddly familiar area.

“Is this the basement of Mrs. Macdonald’s dwelling?” I asked Mr. Holmes.

“I believe it is.” We wandered into the living room, where Mrs. Macdonald was writing notes.

“Excuse me, Mrs. Macdonald,” Mr. Holmes commenced, “could you please wait here? Watson, please gather the children.” As I headed towards the children’s bedrooms, I heard a strangely familiar voice bickering with Jonathan. *Amanda, she was the woman on the telephone.* I struggled to camouflage my exhilaration as I escorted the adolescents to the living room.

“Mr. Holmes, may I have a word with you?” He stepped out of the living room and into the hallway.

“Yes, Watson, what is it?”

“Well, the woman who telephoned the line is Amanda.”

“How did you come to that conclusion?” said Mr. Holmes in a concerned manner.

“I heard her bickering with Johnathan, and Amanda’s voice distinctively matched the telephone’s. Also, she was oddly precise in her movements and each item in the bunker was symmetrical. It is extremely clear to see that she had been scheming her father’s demise and our arrival for some time.”

“Incredible, Watson. ” We barged into the room as confident as bullfighters and presented our case.

“How would she know where to buy these harmful chemicals and poisons?” countered Mrs. Macdonald



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“She had access to your research journal, and she was able to recreate the chemical compounds and suppress them,” Mr. Holmes concluded, “She also had the cooperation of William Macdonald, in order to create contraptions that would release any substance at will, for after we were put to rest, he did not wake next to us in the underground bunker.”

“How could they come up with such contraptions?”

“Mrs. Macdonald, William is an extremely brilliant man. He was able to create these revolutionary inventions because Amanda would risk too much to be caught. She wanted her father’s inheritance in order to start a cleaner and more profitable company than the oil business by using the information that you’ve gathered. Although, she could not pull it off if she had us in the way. So, she needed to eliminate us in order to execute her plan in a manner that would benefit her most. However, that did not work out in her favour because we were able to escape through a fault in her trap.”

“Why would William aid her?”

“William detested the way that Mr. Macdonald dismissed his innovative ideas to improve their company. So, he wanted sole ownership of the business to create his own monopoly of oil. When Amanda came to him with her proposition, he did not hesitate to accept because he had longed for this opportunity for ages.” Amanda stormed out of the house as Holmes chased her. He forcefully detained her and led her back into the home.

“Mr. Holmes, I am truly fascinated by how you decipher every situation that falls onto your path,” I exclaimed.

Confidence cleansed his face, “Well, Watson, one must simply take all of the small pieces in order to develop a greater idea.”