



## A thumbprint on the wall

Watson was surprised to find his friend fast asleep when he came down to breakfast the next morning. He shook him **gently**.

'Wake up,' he said. 'Mrs Hudson will be here soon.'

Holmes woke up immediately. 'Good morning, Watson,' he replied. He saw the questions in the doctor's eyes before he could ask them. 'Yes, I have been here all night. Yes, I have slept very little. And no, I do not know how we can save our young friend, John McFarlane.'

'Oh,' said Watson, 'then perhaps you should wash and change before breakfast.'

'You're right, Watson,' Holmes agreed. He left the room, and Watson sat down at the table. Soon after Mrs Hudson came in with the morning newspaper and a **telegram**.

'Good morning, Dr Watson,' she said. 'Here's your newspaper, and this telegram has just arrived for Mr Holmes. It looks very important.'

Watson took the telegram and looked at it thoughtfully.

'I'm sure it is very important,' he agreed. 'Perhaps it's about Mr McFarlane.'

'The young man who came here yesterday morning?'

'That's right,' said Watson. 'Inspector Lestrade is convinced that he's a murderer, but Holmes and I don't agree.'

'A murderer?' the housekeeper replied. 'Well, he was a strange young man – so wild and excited. But a murderer? I don't think so.'

'Mrs Hudson, your **opinion** is good enough for me,' said Watson. 'Now is that my breakfast that I can smell?'

The housekeeper smiled. 'You're always ready for your breakfast, Dr Watson,' she said. 'It'll be about ten minutes.'

As Mrs Hudson left the room, Holmes returned. He

**gently** softly

**telegram** a very short letter that you send very quickly

**opinion** what you think about someone or something

immediately saw the telegram in Watson's hand.

'That looks interesting,' he said. 'For me?'

Watson nodded and gave him the telegram. Holmes opened it with a paper knife and read it silently. He said nothing but looked out of the window onto Baker Street.

'Well?' asked Watson when he could wait no longer.

Holmes turned to look at his friend 'It's from Lestrade. The Inspector is at Deep Dene House at the moment. He says he has **proof** that McFarlane is the murderer of Jonas Oldacre. In his opinion, we should now give up.'

'This doesn't look good, Holmes,' said Watson.

To his surprise, Holmes laughed.

'Inspector Lestrade has always been sure that John McFarlane killed the builder,' he said, 'and now he says that he has proof. Well, let's see his proof. This is not the time to give up, Watson. We'll go to Norwood immediately.'

'But Holmes,' said Watson, 'it's still very early and—'

Just then Mrs Hudson arrived with their breakfasts.

'And you haven't had your breakfast,' Holmes went on with a smile. 'All right, Watson, we'll go after breakfast. I'm sure that Inspector Lestrade's proof can wait.'

Holmes ate nothing himself, so Watson enjoyed a very large meal and it was after nine o'clock when they left Baker Street. They took a **cab** to the station and it was not long before they were at the front door of Deep Dene House. Watson rang the **doorbell**.

'Now, Watson,' said Holmes, 'you will meet the silent Mrs Lexington.'

A moment later the door opened and the housekeeper stood in front of them.

'Mr Holmes,' she said. 'How can I help you?'

'Good morning to you, Mrs Lexington,' said Holmes. 'This is my good friend, Dr Watson. Is Inspector Lestrade here?'

'He is,' the housekeeper replied.

**proof** information that shows that something is really true

**cab** a taxi

**doorbell** the bell on the front door





**thumbprint** the mark that your thumb makes when it touches something

'Please take us to him.'

Holmes and Watson went in and followed Mrs Lexington to the back of the house. Lestrade was sitting at a table. He looked very pleased to see them.

'Mr Holmes, Dr Watson! Good morning!' he said, standing up. 'You've come to see my proof, I suppose.'

'That's right,' Holmes agreed with a smile. 'I am very happy for you, Lestrade, that you were right all the time.'

'It's good of you to agree that you were wrong,' said the Inspector. 'As for me, I never thought that McFarlane was innocent. The man is a murderer.'

'I'm sure that you are right, Inspector,' Holmes agreed, 'but perhaps we can see your proof now.'

'Of course,' said Lestrade. 'Come with me.'

He stood up and Holmes and Watson followed him into the hall.

'Here,' said the Inspector. 'Look at this.'

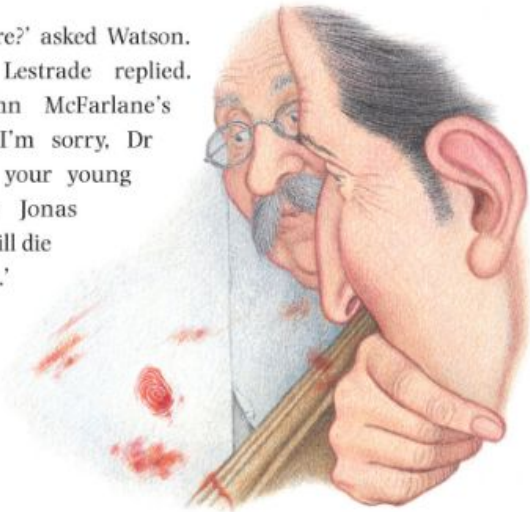
Holmes and Watson crouched down to look at a bloodstain on the wall.

'It's a **thumbprint**,' Lestrade explained. 'John McFarlane's thumbprint.'

'Are you sure?' asked Watson.

'Oh yes,' Lestrade replied.

'That is John McFarlane's thumbprint. I'm sorry, Dr Watson, but your young friend killed Jonas Oldacre. He will die for this crime.'



Holmes looked very thoughtful.

'You're very quiet, Mr Holmes,' said the Inspector. 'Do you have nothing to say?'

Holmes stood up. 'As I said before, Inspector, it's obvious that you are right about McFarlane. He killed the builder for his money and his house. I have only two questions.'

'Go on,' said Lestrade, who was no longer smiling.

'First,' said Holmes, 'who found this thumbprint?'

'It was Mrs Lexington, the housekeeper, who saw it first,' the Inspector replied. 'She showed it to Sergeant Judd.'

'Really?' Holmes looked very pleased with this answer.

'What's your second question, Mr Holmes?' asked Lestrade.

'Why didn't your men find the thumbprint yesterday?'

'That's easy to explain,' the Inspector replied. 'They weren't looking for thumbprints yesterday, not in the hall. And the thumbprint is a little hard to see.'

'Yes, it's hard to see,' Holmes agreed. 'Watson and I had to crouch down to see it. But Mrs Lexington saw it. Perhaps she was washing the floor. I suppose that you are sure that the thumbprint was here yesterday, Inspector?'

'Of course it was!' Lestrade replied crossly. 'Do you think that McFarlane left Scotland Yard during the night and came here to make a thumbprint in blood on the wall?'

'Perhaps not,' said Holmes thoughtfully.

'Then I must ask you both to excuse me. I must return to Scotland Yard to talk to the murderer.'

Lestrade left the room.

'So John McFarlane is a murderer,' said Watson sadly.

'I don't think so, Watson,' Holmes replied.

'What? But Lestrade's proof – the thumbprint! How do you explain it, Holmes?'

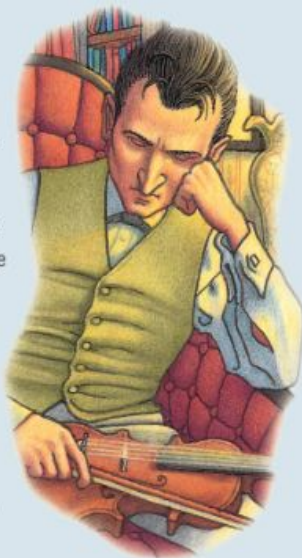
'It's impossible to explain,' said Holmes, 'and for a very good reason. There was no thumbprint on this wall when I was here yesterday.'

**READING CHECK**

**Correct eleven more mistakes in the story.**

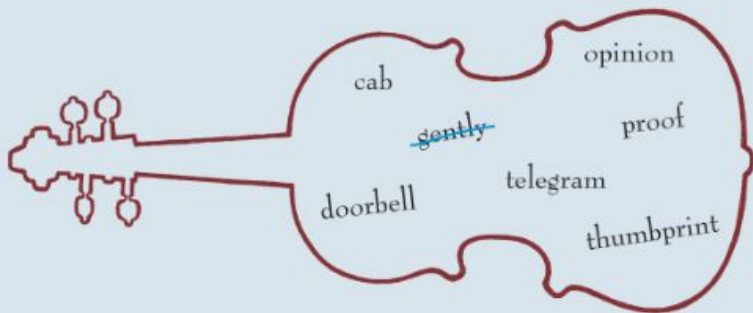
Watson is surprised to find Holmes <sup>asleep</sup> ~~awake~~ when he comes down to breakfast the next morning. Holmes has slept very little. Mrs Hudson arrives with the newspaper and a letter for Holmes. When Holmes is out of the room, Mrs Hudson and Watson talk about Jonas Oldacre. Inspector Lestrade has written from Blackheath to say he is now sure that McFarlane killed the builder and wants Holmes and Watson to go on with their investigation.

Holmes and Watson take a cab to Norwood. Sergeant Judd opens the door of Deep Dene House. Lestrade shows Holmes McFarlane's fingerprint on the floor. But Sergeant Judd found it earlier that day and showed it to Lestrade. Holmes is convinced by Lestrade's proof.



**WORD WORK**

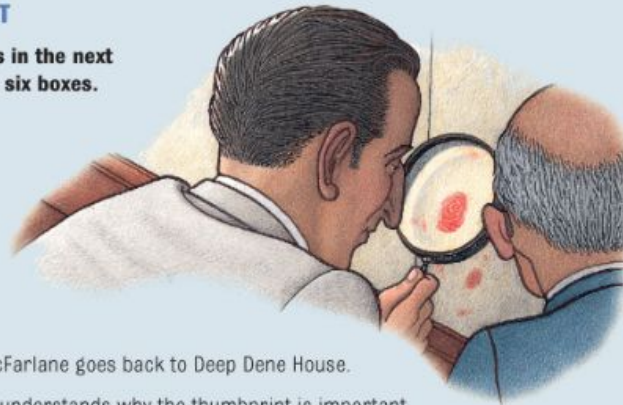
**Match the words in the violin with the underlined words in the sentences on page 41.**



- a Watson shook Holmes in a quiet kind way to wake him. .... gently ....
- b Lestrade sent a fast letter by electric wires to Holmes.
- c Lestrade's way of thinking is that McFarlane is Oldacre's murderer.
- d Listen. It's the bell on the door! I'll go and see who it is.
- e Lestrade says that McFarlane killed the builder, and that he has now got something that shows his idea is true.
- f Watson and Holmes take a taxi with horses pulling it to the station.
- g This glass is dirty; there's a mark from someone's thumb on it.

**GUESS WHAT**

**What happens in the next chapter? Tick six boxes.**



- a  John McFarlane goes back to Deep Dene House.
- b  Holmes understands why the thumbprint is important.
- c  Watson decides that McFarlane is a murderer.
- d  Holmes and Watson go into the garden to look at Oldacre's house.
- e  Inspector Lestrade writes about the murder.
- f  Holmes asks Watson to start a fire in the house.
- g  The police find a woman in a secret room.
- h  Holmes finds Jonas Oldacre's murderer.
- i  Lestrade agrees that Holmes is right about John McFarlane.
- j  The police decide to arrest Mrs Lexington.



## The man on the top floor

Watson did not know what to think. 'I don't understand this, Holmes,' he said at last. 'I don't understand this at all. If the thumbprint wasn't here yesterday—'

Holmes held up a hand to stop him. 'There are two possibilities, Watson. The first is that John McFarlane left his **cell** at Scotland Yard during the night, took the train to Norwood and came to Deep Dene Lodge to make a bloody thumbprint on the wall here. I do not think this is very **probable**, Watson, do you?'

'Of course not, Holmes,' said Watson. 'Then you and I and Inspector Lestrade have the same opinion, and it was not John McFarlane who left this thumbprint.'

'But Lestrade said that it was McFarlane's thumbprint!' said Watson excitedly. 'Oh I am sure that it is McFarlane's thumbprint,' Holmes replied, 'but I am also sure that it was not John McFarlane who left it here. Come, Watson.'

Dr Watson followed his friend out into the garden. 'What are we doing, Holmes?' he asked. 'We're looking,' said Holmes, 'we're looking very carefully.'

Holmes stood in the garden and looked thoughtfully at the front of the house. Then he walked across the lawn and looked at the side of the house. Next Watson followed him to the back of the house and then to the other side, which looked onto the Sydenham Road. Here Holmes stood for a long time with a look of great interest on his face.

'Good,' he said at last, and walked quickly back to the front door, which was still open. Watson followed him inside and downstairs into the **basement**. Holmes looked very carefully

in every room on that floor, then did the same on the ground floor. There was no **furniture** in many of the rooms, but Holmes looked thoughtfully at the walls and at the floor. He and Watson then went upstairs and visited all the bedrooms and the bathroom. After that they climbed to the top floor of the house, where there were three bedrooms, all empty. Holmes began to laugh. He laughed and laughed. Watson looked at his friend, astonished.

'Holmes, what is it?' he asked. 'Are you not feeling well?' Holmes stopped laughing at once and turned to Watson. 'I'm feeling very well, Watson,' he said with a strange smile. 'Come, let us find Inspector Lestrade.'

They went downstairs and found the Inspector at his table. He was busy writing his **report**.

'Are you writing your report already, Inspector?' asked Holmes. 'Are you so sure that you have your murderer?'

Lestrade stopped writing and put down his pen. He did not look pleased.

'Mr Holmes, I have shown you my proof. John McFarlane's thumbprint **proves** that he killed Jonas Oldacre. I have my murderer. He is in his cell at Scotland Yard as we speak.'

'I think, Inspector,' said Holmes, 'that you should speak to one more person before you finish writing your report.'

'Who is this person?' asked Lestrade. 'And where can I find him?'

'How many policemen do you have here today, Inspector?' Lestrade was surprised, but he answered immediately.

'Sergeant Judd and two others.'

'And are they all big, strong men with loud voices?' Lestrade looked at Watson. Watson looked at Lestrade. They were both **baffled**.

'They are all tall and I'm sure that they can shout very loudly if they need to,' the Inspector replied, 'but I don't understand—'

**furniture** tables and chairs for example

**report** what someone writes to explain something that has happened

**prove** to show that something is certainly true

**baffled** when you don't understand something

**cell** a small room in a prison or police station

**probable** almost certainly true

**basement** downstairs from the ground floor of a house





Holmes held up a hand.

'You will understand, Inspector. Now could you please call your men?'

It was obvious that Lestrade was not happy, but he left the room and went to look for Sergeant Judd and the others. Five minutes later Holmes and Watson found Lestrade in the hall with his men.

'Sergeant Judd, you will find some hay in the timber yard. Could you please bring it into the house?' asked Holmes.

Judd looked at Lestrade, who nodded. He came back a few minutes later with a bag of hay.

'This will help us to find our man,' said Holmes. 'Now, Watson, do you have any **matches** in your pocket?'

Watson nodded.

'Then we are ready. Follow me, please.'

The policemen followed Holmes and Watson as they climbed the stairs to the top of the house. When they arrived, Lestrade's face was very red.

'What are you doing, Mr Holmes?' he asked crossly. 'I hope that this is not a **joke**.'

'You will not have to wait much longer, Inspector,' said Holmes with a smile. 'Could you please ask one of your men to bring some water from the bathroom?'

'Water!' Lestrade replied. 'Mr Holmes, I really must . . .'

'Please, Inspector.'

Lestrade thought for a long moment, but in the end sent one of his men to the bathroom for water. When he returned, Holmes opened a window and then asked Watson to light the hay with a match. The hay caught fire immediately and suddenly there was smoke everywhere.

'Now we will find our man, Lestrade,' said Holmes. 'Could we all please shout "fire"? One, two, three . . .'

Holmes, Watson and the four policemen all shouted 'fire!' in loud voices.

**match** you use this to light a fire

**joke** something that you do to make people laugh

'Again!' said Holmes.

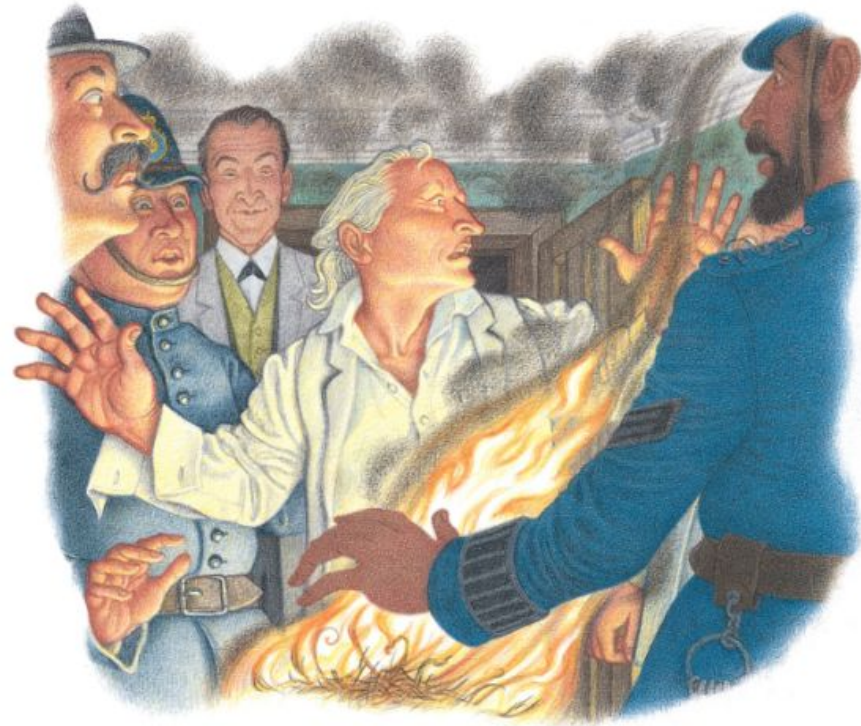
'Fire!'

'And again!'

'Fire!' This time the shout was so loud that Lestrade put his fingers in his ears. Just then a very strange thing happened: a secret door in the wall opened suddenly and a little man ran out.

'Here's your man, Inspector,' said Holmes with a laugh. 'Sergeant Judd, please put some water on the hay to put out our little fire. Thank you, Inspector, this is Mr Jonas Oldacre, the Norwood builder. I think we will learn that he also has another name – Mr Cornelius.'

Watson and the policemen looked long and hard at the





little man, who was standing in front of them and shaking. He had grey eyes and white hair and was very **ugly**.

'Well,' said Lestrade at last when the fire was out. 'Do you have nothing to say, Mr Jonas Oldacre?'

Lestrade's face was red and angry. Oldacre looked very afraid, but he laughed excitedly.

'It was a joke, Inspector,' he explained. 'No more. I never wanted to make any trouble for anybody.'

'What?' said Lestrade angrily. 'You didn't want to make any trouble? And an innocent man is in the cells at Scotland Yard as we speak!'

'Just my little joke, Inspector,' the builder said again.

'Take him away, Sergeant,' said Lestrade. 'The man is dangerous.'

Oldacre went downstairs with Judd and the other policemen. Lestrade turned to Holmes.

'Well, Mr Holmes, once again I have to thank you. This time I was wrong and you were right. John McFarlane is an innocent man. It's obvious that there was no murder here.'

'That's right, Inspector,' Holmes smiled, 'but I understand your mistake. Jonas Oldacre was very clever.'

'But Sherlock Holmes was cleverer!' said Watson. 'Very good work, Holmes.'

'Thank you, Watson. Now let's see the secret room.'

Watson and Lestrade followed Holmes into the room, which was about two metres long. It was impossible to see the door from the **passage**, but in the room they found some furniture, food and water, newspapers and books. Holmes picked up a newspaper.

'This morning's newspaper,' he said. 'I'm sure that Oldacre has enjoyed reading about Mr McFarlane's arrest. And I suppose that Mrs Lexington is the person who has brought him his newspapers and his food and drink.'

**ugly** not beautiful

**passage** the space between rooms in a house

'I must speak to that woman again,' said Lestrade. 'I always thought she had her secrets.'

'Perhaps she has a very big secret,' said Holmes. 'Perhaps she is more to Mr Oldacre than a housekeeper.'

Lestrade looked thoughtful. 'Of course,' he said at last. 'That's why she was happy to **tell lies** for him. She will go to **prison** for this, Mr Holmes.'

'Very good,' Holmes replied. 'Norwood will be a better place without her.'

'I have just one more question for you, Mr Holmes,' said Lestrade. 'Why did Oldacre do this? Why did he want me to arrest John McFarlane?'

Holmes gave the Inspector a long look.

'Many years ago, Inspector,' he explained, 'Jonas Oldacre fell in love. He fell in love with John McFarlane's mother. They spent some time together, but Mrs McFarlane saw that Oldacre was cruel and dangerous and she sent him away. Later she married John's father. On the day that they married Oldacre sent her a photograph of herself with her face slashed. He was very angry and he never forgot it.'

'I see,' said Lestrade. 'So that's why you went to Blackheath.'

'I wanted to talk to John's parents,' Holmes explained. 'I couldn't understand why Oldacre wanted to leave everything to John in his will.'

'I've been very stupid,' said Lestrade sadly.

'Not at all,' said Watson kindly. 'But Sherlock Holmes has been very clever.'

Holmes himself said nothing.

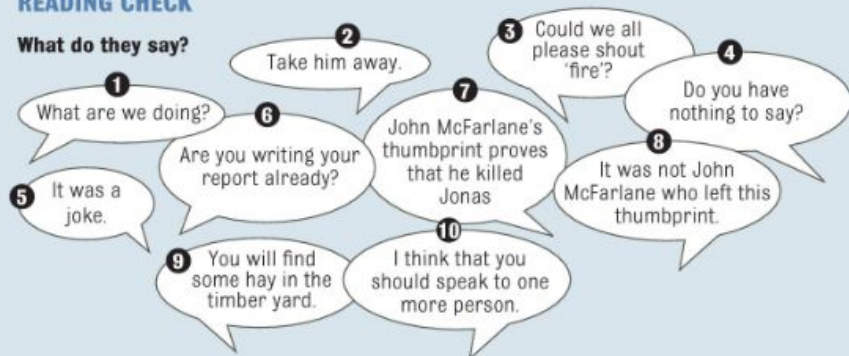
**tell lies** to say things which are not true

**prison** a place where people must stay when they do something wrong



**READING CHECK**

What do they say?



- a Holmes tells Watson: It was not John McFarlane who left this thumbprint.
- b Watson asks Holmes:
- c Holmes asks Lestrade:
- d Lestrade tells Holmes:
- e Holmes tells Lestrade:
- f Holmes tells Sergeant Judd:
- g Holmes asks Watson and the policemen:
- h Lestrade asks Oldacre:
- i Oldacre tells Lestrade:
- j Lestrade says to Sergeant Judd:

**WORD WORK**

1 Find words from Chapter 7.

- a BABLEROP probable
- b TURINFURE
- c FLEDFAB
- d SHETMAC
- e LELC
- f MANSEBET
- g ROTERP
- h EVROP
- i KEQJ
- j SAPGESA

2 Complete the sentences with the words from Activity 1.

- a Holmes did not think that it was probable that John McFarlane made the thumbprint.
- b Lestrade thought that he could  that John McFarlane was a murderer.
- c He was writing a  about the murder of Jonas Oldacre when Holmes stopped him.
- d A  is a room under the ground at the bottom of a house.
- e There was no  in many of the rooms in the house.
- f Lestrade and Watson were  when Holmes asked about the policemen's voices. They couldn't understand why he was asking.
- g Watson used  and dry hay to light a fire.
- h Holmes knew there was a secret room behind one of the walls in the .
- i It is not a  when a criminal sends an innocent man to prison for something he didn't do.
- j Oldacre will spend some time in a prison .

**GUESS WHAT**

What happens in the next chapter? Match the first and second parts of these sentences.

- a John McFarlane
- b Sherlock Holmes explains
- c Holmes, Watson and McFarlane
- d Watson asks Holmes
- e Inspector Lestrade agrees
- f Lestrade thanks Holmes
- 1 take a cab to Scotland Yard.
- 2 that Holmes has been very helpful.
- 3 visits Holmes and Watson in Baker Street.
- 4 for saving the life of an innocent man.
- 5 why they are going to see Inspector Lestrade.
- 6 how he realized that Jonas Oldacre was not dead.