

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

# ELLERY QUEEN'S

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**160 pages**

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*Something special to signal the start of the Sherlockian season  
... first publication in the United States of a brilliant piece of  
Holmesian hijinks by the Literary Editor of "Punch" ...*

## THE CASE OF THE DANISH PRINCE

by MILES KINGTON

### ACT I

*Baker Street, No. 221B.*

*Enter SHERLOCK HOLMES and DR. WATSON*

*Holmes.* Were all the fiery demons of the nether world  
To blow their poisonous smoke up into London,  
Compound it with a yellow hue and take  
Away our light, they could not make a fouler day  
Than we have now.

*Watson.* It's foggy out?

*Holmes.* It is.

A wretched, vile, and tedious kind of morning,  
And nothing in the post but thanks from Scotland  
That I did solve the sudden death of Duncan,  
Not to mention Banquo. No doubt by now  
You've written up the case and had it published?

*Watson.* A little five-act tragedy, with notes  
On some of the more striking details.

*Holmes.* And blood,

And fights, deaths, witches, ghosts, and all  
The melodrama that you inflict on logic,  
I'll be bound. Once I'd seen the importance  
Of having, not two murders, but three,  
The rest was simple. Have you read the paper?

*Watson.* Only the "Morning Post." King Lear's  
Still lost. A fascinating trial in Venice.  
A case of changed identity in Verona.  
And sundry goings on in Windsor. Nothing else.  
*A noise on the stairs*

*Holmes.* But here, unless I'm much mistook, comes one  
That needs our aid. A case at last!

*Enter to them* HAMLET

*Hamlet.*

Which one . . .

*Holmes.* . . . Of us is Holmes? 'Tis I. This gentle here  
Is Watson, my devoted friend and colleague.

*Hamlet.* Good morrow to you both. You do not know me . . .

*Holmes.* Apart from knowing that you are a prince,  
From Denmark, I would hazard, and a solitary,  
That you take snuff, have lately been at sea,  
Were frightened by a horse at five and now  
Are sitting for your portrait, you are a stranger.

*Watson.* Good heavens, Holmes!

*Hamlet.*

Do you have magic powers?

*Holmes.* Sheer observation. You do wear a crown  
And are a prince. You have a Danish accent,  
Your shoes have late been knotted by a seaman,  
There's snuff upon your ruff, and on your doublet  
Some Prussian Blue flicked by a careless painter.  
That you do not frequent society

Was clear because you did not knock the door  
When entering, and then did leave it standing ope.

*Watson.* But, Sherlock, what about his childhood fright!

*Holmes.* Come, come, dear Watson! Lives there yet a man  
Who was not frightened by a horse at five?

*Hamlet.* All that you say is true, and yet I fear  
You cannot guess my problem. To be brief,  
My father was the King of Denmark, where  
Now reigns his brother, my uncle, Claudius,  
With as his wife my mother, the late Queen  
And Queen again. Sir, I implore your aid.

*Holmes.* The grammar's convoluted, but I think  
I have the picture. I have the answer too.

The wrong man reigns—you should have climbed the throne.

*Hamlet.* No, no, that's Danish law, to instate the brother,  
Not the son. What I seek to know

Is how my father was so cruelly murdered?

*Holmes.* Your father murdered? Are you sure of this?

*Hamlet.* Quite sure. My father's ghost has told me so.

*Holmes.* I see. (*Aside*) Quick, Watson, get your gun. This man's  
A raving lunatic. (*To* HAMLET) You have a suspect?

*Hamlet.* I fear the foulest of my uncle, Claudius.

*Holmes.* No evidence?

*Hamlet.* Except that he poured poison  
Into the ear of my poor sleeping father.

*Holmes.* How know'st thou this?

*Hamlet.* The ghost did tell me so.

*Holmes.* Hmm. (*Aside*) A talkative ghost. Would that he were  
Admissible in a court of British justice. (*To HAMLET*) This case is  
not without its points of interest.

Within a day or two, sweet prince, I may well be  
With you in Denmark:

*Hamlet.* My thanks! (*Exit*)

*Holmes.* Or there again

I may well not. I've better things to do  
Than listen to the babblings of mad youths

*Enter CLAUDIUS, disguised*

*Claudius.* Have I the honour to address the well-known Holmes?

*Holmes.* You do not. That is my trusty colleague Watson.

*Watson.* Hello.

*Claudius.* Hello. And was that man outside  
Young Hamlet, Prince of Denmark?

*Holmes.* So he said.

*Claudius.* And did he spin you some far-fangled tale  
Of how his uncle had contrived his father's death?

*Holmes.* That was the drift.

*Claudius.* Pay him no heed. He has  
A most ingenious mind, but little sense.

*Holmes.* Indeed, Your Majesty?

*Claudius.* You guessed?

*Holmes.* Of course.

You too did leave the door ajar, and wear a crown.  
Are there many more like you at home?

*Claudius.* Nevertheless I swear there's nothing to it.  
Remember—you come to Elsinoré at your peril.

*Exit CLAUDIUS*

*Holmes.* Better and better! I think it would not hurt  
To spend a day or two at Elsinore.

Watson, look up the boats and see which leaves  
To-morrow morning on the Danish line.

*Watson.* Right ho.

## ACTS II, III, IV, and V

*Denmark.*

*Enter SHERLOCK HOLMES and WATSON*

*Watson.* A draughty castle this, Holmes, where a man  
Could catch his death of cold. I'm glad I brought  
My tartan rug.

*Holmes.* I thought your kilt looked odd . . .  
I wouldn't be surprised if Hamlet's father  
Froze to death. But look! What shape is this?

*Enter HAMLET'S FATHER'S GHOST*

*Ghost.* For you to be in Denmark is not meet.  
Go now, and get you back to Baker Street.

*GHOST vanishes*

*Watson.* I think he's right, Holmes; I do fear that he  
Came from the other world to give us a warning!

*Holmes.* (*With lens*) Then why did he leave prints in this soft  
earth

Of hunting boots, size ten, one broken heel  
And marks of clay upon the instep? Tell me that.

*Enter HAMLET*

*Hamlet.* 'Tis good to see you, Mr. Holmes. Have you  
Found aught that might reveal the murderer?

*Holmes.* A clue or two. But tell me, Prince, is there  
A man who served your father at the court  
Of whom I might a few light questions ask?

*Hamlet.* Alas, alas, one such there was, but he—  
Polonius, I mean—has just been stabbed i'th'arras.

*Watson.* Sounds painful. Is this a Danish malady?

*Holmes.* And does he live?

*Hamlet.*

No, sir, his life has ebbed.

*Holmes.* Most interesting. And tell me, Hamlet, too;  
If Claudius should die, have you a queen?

*Hamlet.* I would have had, in fair Ophelia.

*Holmes.* You would have had? You mean . . .

*Hamlet.*

She's also dead.

*Watson.* I told you that the castle was unhealthy.

*Holmes.* I think I start to see some light amid the gloom.  
I'll take a walk and meet back in our room.

*A graveyard with diggers.*

*Enter SHERLOCK HOLMES*

*Holmes.* Good fellows, may I talk with you and ask  
What is't you do?

*1st Digger.* Why, sir, 'tis meet we dig, though 'tis not meat  
We dig, but bones, of that we make no bones,  
And then into this hole we place the bones,  
Though being bones they are not whole . . .

*Holmes.*

Here's five bob.

*2nd Digger.* To answer questions?

*Holmes.*

No, to stop thy puns.

Here's five bob more to answer questions with.  
Now, tell me straight, is business good or bad?

*1st Digger.* Not bad, not good. Not good for us, but good  
For those that stay alive. 'Tis many a year  
Since we did have good digging, people live so long.

*Holmes.* Except for Hamlet's father.

*2nd Digger.*

A one-off job.

Since then, nothing. Still, it may pick up.

Ours is a dying business . . .

*Holmes.*

I said, no puns!

*1st Digger.* We're sorry, guv. That's one of our favorite ones.

*In Elsinore Castle.*

*Enter SHERLOCK HOLMES and WATSON.*

*Holmes.* You know my methods, Watson; when in doubt  
Eliminate th'improbable—what is left  
Must be the truth howe'er unlike it seems.

*Watson.* So you have always said, but still I am  
In some uncertainty over the murderer's name.  
Who was it?

*Holmes.* I'll tell you presently,

But first I expect some news. This may be it.

*Enter to them FORTINBRAS*

*Fortinbras.* Alack! What a dreadful day! The heavens them-  
selves

Could no more cease from weeping than the sea . . .

*Holmes.* Come, pull yourself together. I have not time  
To listen to long speeches. What's your news?

*Fortinbras.* Hamlet is dead!

*Holmes.*

I thought as much. Go on.

*Fortinbras.* And Claudius! Laertes! Also Gertrude!

*Holmes.* The whole bang shoot, in fact. That's life.  
Or, as my digger friend would say, that's death.

*Watson.* You have an Australian friend?

*Holmes.*

Sometimes, Watson,

I wonder if I'm really in detection

Or the better half of an awful music hall act.

*Fortinbras.* O heavens, weep! . . .

*Watson.*

He's off again.

*Holmes.*

You asked

Just now what was the murderer's name.

I told you. Eliminate all else

And what is left . . .

*Watson.*

You mean, it's Fortinbras?

*Holmes.* No, no, he's just the man who brings the news.

The gravediggers. Their trade was bad and threatened by

Redundancy, so they conceived a plot/

To slay the highest in the land and profit

By their piecework. Only one mistake they made,

To imitate the ghost and wear their boots the while.

I wrote a monograph on soles you may have read.

*Watson.* May God have mercy.

*Holmes.*

Mercy on what?

*Watson.*

Their soles.

*Holmes.* That settles it—let's leave this cursed place

Where none do ope their mouths but they do utter puns.

Besides, I have a telegram for Lestrade in the Yard

Begging for my help in some new case.

*Watson.* What says he now?

*Holmes.*

"Othello's wife is dead.

We found her lying lifeless on her bed."

*Watson.* No sooner is one case accounted for,

Than we go chasing after . . .

*Holmes.*

Don't say it!

*Watson.*

. . . some Moor.

SHERLOCK HOLMES *knocks* WATSON to the ground.

*Exeunt omnes.*

CURTAIN

