

## THE BLUE DIAMOND

One day last winter I went to see Sherlock Holmes. He was sitting in a comfortable chair looking at an old hat.

“I’m glad to see you., Watson” he said “You know Captain Petersen, don’t you. Well, he bought me this hat and a chicken.”

Holmes then proceeded to tell me the full story

“Two days ago” he said “ Petersen was walking along Goodge Street. He had been to a party which finished at three o’clock in the morning. By the light of the street lamps he saw a tall man in front of him, carrying a chicken under his arm.

Suddenly two men came out of the shadows, stopped the tall man and started a quarrel. One of the men hit the tall man and his hat fell on the ground. Captain Petersen rushed forward to help the tall man but when he saw Petersen he shouted “Police” and ran down the street. The other two men followed him. This hat and a chicken were left on the ground.”

“Why didn’t Petersen give them back to the tall man?” I asked.

“Because the tall man had disappeared, Watson. But there was a card on the chicken’s leg which said “For Mrs Henry Baker.” The name Henry Baker is also inside the hat. Petersen wanted to find the man , but there are hundreds of Henry Bakers in London.”

“So what did he do?”

“He brought the hat and the chicken to me,” said Holmes. “I kept the chicken until today, but I couldn’t keep it any longer. Petersen will be eating it now.”

At that moment the door opened and Captain Petersen rushed into the room. He was very excited.

“The chicken, Mr Holmes! The chicken!” he cried. “Look at this. .My wife found it inside the chicken.” He held out his hand and there was a beautifully cut blue stone.

“My God!” cried Holmes “It’s the blue diamond that was stolen from Lady Morcar, just five days ago. There’s a report in the newspaper.” Holmes searched through a pile of newspapers. “Ah here it is:

### **Lady Morcar’s Diamond stolen**

Lady Morcar was staying at the Cosmopolitan Hotel. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December the famous blue diamond disappeared from her room. The police think an employee of the hotel called John Horner is responsible for the theft. Roger Ryder another employee noticed a broken table in Lady Morcar’s room . He told Horner to repair it, and then left Horner alone in the room. When he returned the room was empty, and the box which had contained the diamond was on the floor. The police immediately questioned John Horner who said that he had not seen either the box or the diamond. Horner has a previous conviction for theft.

“I understand that the diamond disappeared from Lady Morcar’s room” I said “But how on earth did it get inside a chicken?”

“Good point Watson” said Holmes “All we know is that a Henry Baker had the chicken which contained the diamond. So our first task must be to trace this Henry Baker.”

Holmes did this by the simple expedient of placing the information in the Lost and found column of the evening newspaper. It read “Found in Goodge Street—a chicken and a black hat. Will Mr Henry Baker come to 221B Baker St, where he can claim his hat and chicken.”

The ploy worked because that evening a tall grey haired man arrived at Holmes’ apartment.

“I have your hat” said Holmes “but I’m afraid your chicken has been eaten.”

Henry Baker seemed distressed by this information. He was obviously not a wealthy man, and the chicken would have been a much needed luxury.

“Don’t worry,” said Holmes “I have another chicken, the same size and quite fresh. Would you like that instead?”

“Oh yes please” said Henry Baker “Thank you so much.”

From this reply it was clear to both of us that this man had no knowledge that his original chicken contained a priceless diamond.

“Just one thing “ said Holmes “ May I ask one question? Where did you buy the **other** chicken?”

“I bought it from Mr Breckenridge in Covent Garden. He sells most of his chickens to the Alpha Hotel so they must be good.”

Once Henry Baker had left, Holmes and I set off for Covent Garden. We easily found Mr Breckenridge.

“Excuse me” said Holmes “my friend and I ate one of your chickens at the Alpha Hotel. It was so good that I’m sure it was a country bird, but my friend says there is no difference, and its just as likely to be a town bird. Which one of us is right?”

Breckenridge picked up a book “Your friend is right. Here, you see, December 22<sup>nd</sup> Two dozen chickens bought from Mrs Oakshott, 117 Brixton Road. Sold to the Alpha Hotel”

We left Mr Breckenridge and walked down the street. Holmes was laughing “That was easy “ he said “We will find the answer to this mystery at Mrs Oakshott’s.”

Suddenly we heard a noise behind us. Mr Breckenridge was having a heated argument

with a little man.