Sherlock Holmes receives some unwanted visitors on Christmas Eve. Each comes with a valuable lesson about forgiveness, friendship and love.

Disclaimer: I don’t own any of these characters. I just like to play with them every now and then.

A debt of thanks must go to Charles Dickens for this wonderful blueprint that I have used for this particular story.
I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it.

Their faithful Friend and Servant,
C.D.
December 1843

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The Cabbie's Ghost

Chapter Summary

Sherlock Holmes receives some unwanted visitors on Christmas Eve. Each comes with a valuable lesson about forgiveness, friendship and love.

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The Cabbie was dead. Of that there could be little doubt. Doctor John Watson, late of the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers had seen to that.

He had shot the serial killer just as he had convinced his friend, Sherlock Holmes to participate in his sick little game of chance.

Sherlock could confirm absolutely that the cabbie was most definitely deceased, having observed him take his last painful breath.

For further details I would advise that you read the good doctor’s blog on the case titled ‘A Study in Pink’ for further details.

The fact remained the Cabbie was dead. Dead as a doornail.

***

Christmas Eve

Sherlock Holmes, the world’s only Consulting Detective had just turned into Baker Street. Usually he preferred to travel by taxi to get around London. But it was Christmas Eve, taxis were few and far between, while the trains and buses he knew would be packed to capacity. So that left him with only one option, walk.

He had just finished up with Detective Inspector Lestrade from New Scotland Yard on a case concerning the theft of a valuable and rare blue jewel, called The Carbuncle no less. A jewel that somehow ended up in the gullet of a goose set to become someone’s Christmas dinner.

Usually he wouldn’t go out for anything less then a seven. This case had barely been a four, and even that was stretching the definition. But it was Christmas Eve and it seemed that even the criminal classes had decided to take a well-earned break from their illegal activities.

Damn them!

But that wasn’t the only thing that had driven him to leave the comfort of 221B on such a bitterly cold day. He had had about all that he could take of everyone and their festive cheer.
Usually he could cope with it. But with the birth of the Watson’s offspring, everyone seemed determined to ratchet up their normal irritating behaviours to a whole new level.

He felt suffocated by all the cloying affections that had begun since the birth of the baby. And these cloying affections seemed to be spreading and infecting everyone with whom she came into contact.

Except him.

All he saw when he looked at their daughter was someone who spent her days eating, sleeping and excreting at both ends. Not to mention having a very healthy pair of lungs that she made sure got a regular workout.

He was certain that he was not the only one to be taken by surprise when John and Mary had asked him to be her Godfather. He was after all a high-functioning sociopath. And he had been reliably informed, on more than one occasion, that he didn’t possess a heart.

It was ridiculous, foolhardy. What they were asking of him definitely fell into the ‘not my area’ category.

But they had insisted. No one else would do.

Generally people viewed him as arrogant, rude, insensitive, and a freak.

And he was fine with that. Labels never bothered him.

He was about to enter 221B when he received a text. It was Lestrade. He read it, and rolled his eyes.

‘The Red Headed League. Really! Was he serious?’

Clearly John’s penchant for ridiculous titles was spreading.

He fired back a quick response.

Not worth my time.

SH

Upon entering 221B Sherlock knew instantly that something was amiss. He made his way up the stairs to his flat. By the time he reached his door he already knew what awaited him.

“What do you want Mycroft?” he demanded even before he’d passed the threshold.

“Christmas, Sherlock,” the elder Holmes replied. “A time of good cheer.”

Sherlock snorted.

“Who sent you? Was it Mary?” Sherlock paused, looking his brother up and down very carefully.

Mycroft detested Christmas even more than Sherlock, for reasons only he knew. So it must be something very particular to bring him to Baker St at this time.

Ah!

A small smile escaped Sherlock’s lips. “Mummy.”

Mycroft immediately tensed, his eyes, almost but not quite meeting his younger brothers.
Mycroft sighed dramatically. “For reasons that I will never understand,” he said. “She feels that it is very important that you attend the Watson’s little sware tonight.”

Sherlock gave another snort. “If she really thought it important enough, she would have come and told me herself.”

“She would have. But she and Daddy are seeing a play in the West End, something ghastly about three ghosts.”

Both brothers shuddered at the thought.

“Then I’m sorry that you have had to waste so much of your valuable time,” Sherlock responded. “Because I have no intentions of attending. Please send my apologies to John and Mary, I have another pressing case that needs my immediate attention.”

“What case?”

“The rather intriguing case of the Red Headed League. It looks to be rather… informative.”

Mycroft raised a sceptical eyebrow, but opted to keep his opinion to himself, knowing full well that Sherlock would be able to deduce them anyway.

Instead he tried another strategy.

“They’ll all be disappointed,” he pointed out. “Not to mention Mummy won’t be pleased.”

“I don’t see why not,” Sherlock objected. “I spent Christmas with everyone last year. Or don’t you remember?”

Mycroft winced visibly. It was not a topic he wished to be reminded of. Which was precisely why Sherlock had mentioned it.

Seeing that Sherlock was resolute in his decision, he saw little point in pursuing the matter any further.

He made his way out the door. But before he left, he couldn’t help adding. “You’ll regret it brother mine.”

“Is that a threat, blood?”

“Not a threat Sherlock. Just an observation.”

With that Mycroft headed down the stairs and out the front door.

Sherlock followed him. He stood on the footpath watching Mycroft’s chauffer driven car make its way down Baker St.

Sherlock turned, intent on retreating back to the sanctuary of his flat when he was accosted by a couple of well meaning charity workers.

Under normal circumstances he would have been more than happy to offer a generous donation.

But of late, whether real or imagined, Sherlock felt that his select number of friends and colleagues were all conspiring against him to drag him kicking and screaming into the all too irritating tradition that was Christmas.
And now apparently his own family had been recruited to imbue him with some Christmas Spirit.

Traitors!

But all their efforts were in vain. All they had done was to give him further incentive to reinforce his resolve to remain at a distance from such annoying trivialities.

When the said charity workers made to follow him as he walked through 221B’s front door, he did not feel the least inclined to be giving like Old Saint Nick.

He felt more akin to the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge. And as such, he reacted accordingly. “Bah Humbug!” he roared before slamming the door in their shocked faces.

***

The flat was blissfully silent. Mrs Hudson had gone out to do some last minute Christmas shopping.

This was a relief to Sherlock, who now wished for the tranquillity of peace and quiet, with no irritating or unnecessary distractions.

He walked into the kitchen, opened the fridge and debated between starting an experiment on the toes he’d pilfered from St Bart’s morgue earlier in the day. Molly would likely slap him for that, once she made the discovery, so something to look forward to. Or have the leftover Chinese from last night.

His stomach quickly made the decision for him.

Making his way back to his chair, he sat down and began eating his meal cold. Heating it up in the microwave would require him to get up again, and he frankly wasn’t in the mood.

He’d only managed a couple of mouthfuls when he had the oddest sensation. If anyone had asked him to describe it, he would have said it was like someone had walked over his grave.

Which was ridiculous, because the dead do not feel. And he wasn’t six feet under, yet.

But he couldn’t suppress a shiver as the temperature in the room suddenly dropped by several degrees.

Putting the food down, Sherlock looked around the room. Nothing seemed out of place.

Then he glanced over to the skull on the mantelpiece, only to be confronted with the face of the Cabbie.

“Why can’t people think?” it asked.

Sherlock blinked, and the skull was back.

Sherlock was a rational man, and so he put down what he had just seen as one of several possibilities: hallucination, exhaustion or being high. He instantly discounted the latter. He hadn’t taken drugs since the day Molly slapped him at Bart’s eighteen months before.

Sighing he got up, and went into his bedroom to change into something more comfortable.

He returned to his seat in an old pair of sweatpants and t-shirt, and his blue dressing gown. He leaned back; steepled his fingers under his chin and attempted to enter his mind palace.
Except that there was a problem. Every room he entered contained the same thing.

The Cabbie.

“Doesn’t it drive you mad?” it said.

Sherlock lowered his hands, he was clearly not going to get anywhere that way.

Without warning the TV, laptop and microwave turned themselves on.

Thirty seconds later they stopped.

All was silent.

Sherlock cocked his head to one side. What was that?

He was certain he’d heard something.

Yes, there it was again.

Heavy footsteps making their way up the stairs to his flat. The steps were uneven, as though one leg weighed more than the other.

“Something wicked this way comes,” he murmured.

Sherlock’s suspicions were confirmed when the Cabbie’s ghost materialised through the door to his flat. It was dragging a ball and chain.

Sherlock shook his head, trying to clear it. But it didn’t help. Standing right there before him was the Cabbie.

Impossible though it was. There he stood, dressed as he had been in life, though with the added addition of the blood that had flowed due to John’s well-aimed bullet.

Sherlock admitted, even if only to himself that he was a little unnerved. In his head he kept repeating to himself ‘When you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains must be the truth,’

Deciding to take his own sound advice, he took a deep breath as he glared at the spectre before him.

“How are you?” he demanded.

“Ask me who I was?” came the unfazed response.

Sherlock sighed impatiently, already getting bored. Always the silly little games with this one. “Very well. Who were you?”

“You know who I was Mister Holmes. I’m the Cabbie from ‘A Study in Pink’”

Sherlock shook his head in disbelief, the whole thing was preposterous. The dead coming to life. And to top it off, the dead enjoy reading John Watson’s Blog. What next? There was only one way to find out.

“What do you want? Why are you here?”

“I’m here tonight to warn you,” the Cabbie began.

“Warn me of what?”
The Cabbie looked down at the ball and chain that bound him. “You have a chance to escape my fate.”

Sherlock snorted with disgust. “I am nothing like you.”

“We’re not as different as you’d like to believe,” the Cabbie replied. “We’ve both killed for the sake of those we love.”

Sherlock refused to dignify the statement with an answer.

The Cabbie continued. “You will be visited by three spirits.”

“Tell them not to bother, I wont be in.”

“Oh you’ll want them to come Mister Holmes. In fact you’ll need them to. Because without their visits,” the Cabbie warned. “You will be doomed to suffer a fate worse than death.”

“Wouldn’t be the first time,” Sherlock muttered.

“Do not take this warning lightly,” the apparition said as it began to fade. “They are coming.”

Sherlock remained seated, staring at where the ghost had stood for a moment or two. He then looked around him. All seemed normal.

Except for the clock, its second hand appeared stuck, unable to move forward. Like it was stuck in time.

Sherlock couldn’t keep his eyes off it. “Interesting.”

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The First of the Three Spirits

Chapter Summary

Sherlock Holmes receives some unwanted visitors on Christmas Eve. Each comes with a valuable lesson about forgiveness, friendship and love.

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Sherlock’s eyes snapped open.

He’d not been aware of falling asleep. He put it down to being mesmerised by the faulty clock.

A quick glance confirmed that it was still stuck in time.

He got up and inspected the clock. He tried winding it up, shaking it. But the second hand resolutely remained stuck. By the time he’d checked his watch and mobile, finding that they too were likewise afflicted, he knew it was time for a rethink.

Frustrated he threw himself back in his chair.

And then a light breeze ruffled Sherlock’s hair. The detective frowned. All the windows were closed. So where could the breeze have originated?

He was about to get up from his seat when he spotted a figure standing before him.

The figure was that of a young man, early to mid teens, slight but athletic. Clearly loved swimming, apparent by the water dripping off him and onto the carpet. Mrs Hudson wouldn’t be pleased.

But there was something else.

Sherlock looked deep into the boy’s eyes.

Correction. He had loved swimming, up until the day he’d been so callously murdered.

Carl Powers.

The boy that had started it all now stood before him. His wore an expression of sadness, fear and confusion.

“I’m sorry,” Sherlock whispered.

The ghost turned his head slightly on an angle. A frown marred his brow.

‘What do you have to be sorry for?’ his expression clearly read. ‘You didn’t kill me.’
He then reached out a ghostly hand to Sherlock, who without conscious thought took hold of it. He was surprised to find it solid in his grip. The flesh a little cooler to the touch than was normal, but no more.

Carl pulled him to his feet.

Being a rational man, a man of science and logic, Sherlock decided there was only one way to deal with this whole bazaar situation. He was resolved to treat what was happening to him as an experiment.

And what was needed was data. Sherlock was determined to collate as much as possible.

“Where are we going?” Sherlock asked.

The ghost indicated the windows that faced out onto Baker St.

Sherlock looked at the ghost, then the windows and then down at what he wore.

“I’m not exactly dressed for going out.”

The ghost ignored him. He pulled Sherlock with surprising strength across the room and towards the windows.

Expecting the worst, Sherlock closed his eyes and braced for impact.

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Christmas Eve - Past

After a couple of minutes Sherlock opened his eyes to discover that, not only was he no longer in Baker St. He was no longer in London.

He was in the country, standing outside his family home.

More remarkable then that, though it was snowing and he was standing there with bare feet. He didn’t feel cold.

He turned to the ghost. “Why did you bring me here?” he asked. “My parents are in London.”

The ghost inclined its head toward the street.

Sherlock turned.

Every car he could see moving along that quiet country road, he clearly remembered from his childhood.

Inexplicable as it was, they had somehow travelled back in time.

Carl pulled him towards the front door. As they passed through it Sherlock made sure to keep his eyes open.

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The scene they walked into showed that it was clearly Christmas Eve. Mrs Holmes is in the kitchen busily making mince pies.
Sitting at the kitchen table is the young Sherlock. He is dressed as a pirate, but he isn’t charging about like he usually would. He is waiting.

And Sherlock knows who he is waiting for, his faithful companion, Redbeard.

He also knows what events are about to follow. Try as he might, he has never been able to completely delete these particular memories.

To have to relive them again…

He turned to the ghost to demand, “Why? Why have you brought me here?”

The ghost of Carl Powers looked at him with an expression full of sympathy. But it refused to answer him.

Because Sherlock already knows why he’s been brought here, to this particular time. He had already deduced it.

He was here to learn a lesson.

From outside can be heard the panicked voice of Sherlock’s father.

“Marion! Open the door. Hurry!”

Sherlock’s mother rushes from the kitchen to the front door and lets her husband in.

He staggers through the door carrying Redbeard in his arms.

“What happened?” his wife asked.

“We were walking through the woods when Redbeard spotted a rabbit up ahead. He tore off after it, but got in the way of a hunter intent on shooting the rabbit,” Mr Holmes explained.

Redbeard whimpered softly.

“I don’t think it’s too bad,” Mr Holmes continued. “But we need to get him to the Veterinary Clinic.”

“What’s wrong with Redbeard?” the young Sherlock asked as he walked over to his parents.

Mrs Holmes took a deep breath. “I’m afraid he’s been shot,” she said.

“No!” the boy cried, rushing forward.

Sherlock reached out to try and stop his younger self, but the ghost intervened. Its expression is crystal clear. He is not to interfere.

He is here to observe, to learn and to collect data.

That is all.

Sherlock reluctantly steps back.

Young Sherlock carefully wraps his arms around his beloved dog. Tears pouring down his face.

“What is all the racket about?” came the bored, languid tones of the teenaged Mycroft.

He stood leaning against the doorframe. Though young in years, his serious demeanour and
exceptional intelligence aged him considerably. This was enhanced by his choice of clothes, a waistcoat and suit rather than t-shirt and jeans.

“Look after Sherlock, Mycroft,” his mother instructed.

Mycroft simply rolled his eyes.

“I want to go with Redbeard,” the young Sherlock cried.

“No Sherlock,” his mother said as she pulled him to one side. “You have to stay here.”

“But Redbeard needs me. What if something happens to him?”

“Nothing will happen to him Sherlock. But we have to go now. The quicker we get him to the Veterinary Clinic, the quicker he’ll be home.”

“Promise.”

“I promise.”

Sherlock watched his younger self, standing there, trying to be brave. At that time he believed absolutely what his parents told him. And he had no reason to doubt his mother now.

But that would quickly change.

Sherlock became aware that the ghost was watching him closely. He returned the ghosts look calmly.

A moment later the ghost took Sherlock’s hand and led him back through the front door.

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They emerged into the consulting room of the local Veterinary Surgeon.

Redbeard was laid out on the examination table.

“It was for the best,” the Vet tried to reassure them.”

“But I don’t understand,” Mr Holmes said, his voice breaking. “The bullet… wasn’t deep… how?”

“The bullet nicked an artery,” the Vet explained. “It caused internal bleeding. His heart, big as it was, just couldn’t cope.”

Mrs Holmes stroked the loyal Redbeard’s head lovingly. “What do we tell Sherlock?” she cried. “I promised him Redbeard would pull through. That we would bring him home.”

“We tell him the truth,” her husband replied as he wrapped a comforting arm around her shaking shoulders.

“He wont understand,” she said

“I know.”

And he hadn’t, Sherlock acknowledged.

He reached out towards the ghost who took his offered hand.

There was no avoiding what was to come now.
“No! No! No!” screamed the devastated younger Sherlock. “You promised!”

“Sherlock, dear,” his mother tried to explain as she reached for him.

But he would have none of it.

He had never felt so betrayed.

Hurt and anger welled up inside him, and without warning he flew at his mother. His arms battering at her as he repeated over and over again.

“You promised he would be okay. You promised, you promised, you promised.”

Everyone stood in stunned silence. Even the usually disinterested Mycroft is shocked, if only temporarily by Sherlock’s ferocity.

After a few minutes an exhausted Sherlock wrenches himself away and flees to the sanctuary of his bedroom.

***

Christmas morning finds the rest of the family sitting around the kitchen table eating breakfast.

There is no conversation; no chitchat, no arguments. Instead there is an awkward silence. They do not meet each other’s eyes.

Their attention is focussed on the kitchen door.

They wait.

Eventually the young Sherlock enters.

It is immediately apparent to everyone that this is a completely different Sherlock from the one who fled to his room the night before.

That little boy would never be seen again.

It had been replaced by one who no longer wants to be a pirate.

This Sherlock views the world through cold and emotionless logic. He has vowed to have nothing to do with any form of sentiment. He does not require friends. And prefers to go forth into the world alone.

This Sherlock walks over to the table to grab a piece of toast before turning and leaving the room without a word.

The only one who appears genuinely pleased by this new development is Mycroft.

He rises from the table, smirks at his stricken parents, before sauntering out of the kitchen and going in search of this new and marginally improved younger brother.

Sherlock’s eyes have not left his parents distraught faces.

“I never knew,” he murmured.
But before he can make a move towards them, the ghost of Carl Powers blocks his path.

There is a question in its expressive eyes.

He waits patiently for a response.

Sherlock nods.

The ghost smiles softly. It reaches out a hand and places it against the high-functioning sociopaths heart.

Sherlock feels a tingling sensation.

Then oblivion.

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The Second of the Three Spirits

Chapter Summary

Sherlock Holmes receives some unwanted visitors on Christmas Eve. Each comes with a valuable lesson about forgiveness, friendship and love.

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Sherlock’s eyes snapped open again. This was becoming a habit, he noted.

He was back sitting in his chair in his flat at Baker St.

Checking the clock, he noted that it was still unable to move forward.

Getting up, Sherlock made his way cautiously towards the windows. Pulling back one of the curtains he looked down on Baker St.

He noted people rushing madly about. Either making a last minute dash for the shops, or trying to get to the relative peace and quiet of home.

As he observed the ordinary scene below him, he reflected briefly upon the unsettling events that he had been obliged to witness once again. Though this time it had been through the eyes of a rational man, and not that of an emotional young boy.

He sighed, frustrated. What was the point? Hindsight? Perspective?

What had happened had happened, and what was done was done. There was no going back.

Was there?

He is pulled abruptly away from his thoughts by a strong gust of wind that tears through the room. The gust is so strong that it is able to pull the door to his flat wide open, with a bang and a crash.

Realising what is about to happen, Sherlock turns to receive his new visitor.

“Did you miss me?”

James Moriarty.

Though impeccably dressed as usual, the ghost nonetheless was not looking its best. But a bullet that enters your mouth and exits the back of your head will have that affect.

In a vain attempt to disguise the messy aftermath, adorned on its head like a crown was a wreath of holly.
Sherlock stood his ground and glared at the ghost.

The ghost glared back.

Growing impatient Sherlock demanded. “What do you want?”

One moment Moriarty is in the doorway, the next he stands before the detective.

Without warning that ghost has grabbed hold of Sherlock’s right hand and has pulled him in close, a manic grin spread across its face.

“Your on the side of the angels,” it says as it glances up towards the ceiling.

Sherlock looks up as they ascend at speed towards, and then through…

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Christmas Eve - Present

To the living room of John and Mary Watson.

Sherlock immediately disengages himself from Moriarty’s grasp and puts as much distance between them as he can in such a confined area.

He walks around the room. It doesn’t take him long to figure out the main topic of conversation.

But the self-satisfied smirk that settles on his lips is more than efficiently wiped when he spots the ghost mouthing ‘Sir Boast-A-Lot.’

He mentally kicks himself for allowing such a weakness to be on display in front of one such as this spirit represented. Sherlock refocusses his mind back to the task that has been set before him.

There is a reason he has been brought here. He needs to find out exactly what it is. For that he was going to need more data.

So he began to circulate the room.

His parents appeared to be having a very earnest, heart-felt conversation.

“He should be here,” his mother said. “Why isn’t he here?”

“You know what he’s like,” his father noted calmly, as he tried to ease his wife’s growing agitation.

But it was to no avail.

“But why?” she cried. “Why does he choose to divorce himself from all forms of sentiment?” She turned pleading eyes on her eldest son. “Why?”

Mycroft raised an eyebrow. “Redbeard perhaps.”

He then went to get himself another drink. Anything to ensure that he didn’t have to bare witness to the aftermath of his pointed remark.

Sherlock glared at his brother, even though he was fully aware that Mycroft couldn’t see him. The urge to trip Mycroft up is almost overwhelming, but he manages to contain himself.

John and Mary are having a lively discussion.
“Ever since Amanda was born he’s been avoiding us,” John stated.

Mary, as always, did her best to defend his behaviour. “I think avoiding is a little… harsh. He did come to her christening.”

“Only because you promised to put another bullet in him.”

Mary shrugged, grinning sheepishly.

”Okay then. What would you call it?”

“It’s like the lead up to our wedding. You remember what he was like?”

“I know,” John replied trying to remain calm. “But he’s my best friend and our daughter’s Godfather. And he should know by now that he has nothing to fear. God knows all of us here in this room have proved his ridiculous theory about being alone protecting him and us wrong.”

Mary smiled sympathetically at her husband. “A genius he may be. But you know as well as I do he’s a bit slow when it comes to feelings. Feeling them and accepting them as a strength rather than a weakness.”

It was at that moment that Moriarty, who had been loitering on the other side of the room, decided to make his way casually over to the baby’s bassinet.

He leaned over to observe Amanda, who appeared to be aware of his presence. She began to fuss and fret as he started to sing to her.

“It’s raining. It’s pouring. Sherlock is boring.”

An intense need to protect engulfs Sherlock’s whole being as he observes the ghost interacting with his Goddaughter. He storms over to Moriarty.

“Get away from her,” he snarls.

The ghost straightens. It looks the detective up and down before petulantly stalking off to take up a position by the windows.

Sherlock checks to make sure Amanda is all right. As with Moriarty, it appears she can see him. She offers him a smile as she reaches out her arms towards him.

Sherlock lightly brushes his fingertips across her cheeks and over her eyes.

Instantly she yawns and goes back to sleep.

Reassured that she is safe, he continues with his investigation.

Lestrade, Donovan and Anderson are arguing as usual. Lestrade is defending him, Donovan insulting him and Anderson trying to give any number of implausible excuses for his non-attendance at the party.

Their argument is interrupted when Lestrade’s mobile rings.

“Lestrade. Yes. Where? I’ll be right there.”

He indicates to Donovan and Anderson that they are needed.
“Everything all right Greg?” John queried.

“Sorry John,” Lestrade replied. “We have to go. There’s been another attempted break-in of the vaults at the Bank of England. This time low tech, they’ve attempted to tunnel their way through. Sounds as though an innocent bystander accidentally came across them and was shot for his trouble. Poor bastard.”

As they headed out the door Lestrade turned back. “Merry Christmas.”

The conversation briefly turned to the bank robbery that had ended with such tragic consequences.

“Pity Sherlock wasn’t there to sort it out,” Mary remarked.

“Can’t see him bothering,” John responded. “It would have to be something really special to get Sherlock to worry about a bank robbery. And we know for a fact Moriarty isn’t behind this one.”

The conversation quickly turned back to happier topics.

Sherlock spotted that Molly was deep in conversation with Mrs Hudson.

He noted that this Christmas she had opted for a simple yet elegant short, figure hugging, and short sleeved black dress. Her hair was down, with no other adornments needed.

Molly sighed. “I’ll just have to drop his present off to Baker St in the New Year.”

“That would probably be best,” Mrs Hudson agreed.

Molly’s mobile rang.

She apologised to Mrs Hudson as she pulled her phone from her bag and checked the Caller ID.

“I need to take this,” she said as she moved to a corner of the room for some privacy.

Sherlock followed her.

“But Mike,” she protested. “Surely someone else could…” She stops as Mike Stamford interrupts her, what he tells her leaves Molly visibly shaken. Her face goes deathly pale and she has difficulty swallowing. “Yes. Yes of course,” she finally replies unsteadily. Her voice holds a slight tremor. “I’ll come right away.”

Sherlock frowns.

Molly never gets upset about performing an autopsy. She was too professional for that. She knew and understood that there was a time and a place.

But as he watched her, he realised he was clearly missing something.

But that professionalism was back when she informed the Watson’s that she too has to leave.

John can see she is clearly distressed. “Molly, are you all right? What’s going on?”

“I’m fine John, really,” she replies. But she cannot look him, or anyone else in the eye. “I have to go. I’ll see you later.”

When John attempts to question her further, she responds, “I have a promise to keep.” She then gathers up her bag and bids everyone a hasty goodbye.
He looks to Mary for confirmation. She nods, Molly isn’t telling the whole truth.

The ghost saunters over to stand next to Sherlock. He begins to sing again.

“I’m laughing. I’m crying. Sherlock is dying.”

Molly rushes past them looking for her coat before heading for the door. Sherlock reaches out to her. But his hand goes right through her.

Determined to find out what has her so distressed, he goes to follow her. But Moriarty pulls him back, shaking his head sternly.

Sherlock stands in the open doorway lost in thought.

He isn’t aware that John has moved until he goes to shut the door. John inadvertently placed his hand over the consulting detectives heart.

Sherlock gasps at the uncomfortable sensation. His eyes roll to the back of his head as darkness envelops him as he falls backward.

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The Last of the Spirits

Chapter Summary

Sherlock Holmes receives some unwanted visitors on Christmas Eve. Each comes with a valuable lesson about forgiveness, friendship and love.

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Sherlock’s eyes snap open.

He barely has time to register that he is once again back at Baker St, before the tornado twists its way through it.

Sherlock drops to the floor and covers his head with his arms.

Around him the flat and almost all of the contents are systematically and ruthlessly destroyed.

As quickly as it starts, it’s over.

Sherlock raised his head, and cautiously got to his feet.

Without even seeing it, he knows that the final spirit has put in an appearance.

The unpleasant smell of rotting flesh is enough to convince him of that.

Looking around the ruins of what used to be his flat, he at first doesn’t spot it. Though the foul stench in the air tells him that it is near.

Making another scan of the room, his eyes fall upon his chair. It is in its usual spot in front of the fireplace. It is undamaged, and occupied.

Sitting in his chair is a cloaked and hooded figure all in black.

Sherlock slowly approaches. The closer he gets, the harder it is to suppress his sense of revulsion at the figure sitting there.

The spirit lifts its covered head. Its dead eyes are fiercely penetrating as they look right through him. Constantly assessing him.

Here is the only man in the whole of his career to date who has had the power to turn the stomach of Sherlock Holmes.

Charles Augustus Magnussen.
An unpleasant man in life, in death Magnussen is a hideous sight to behold.

Its rotting flesh desperately grasps at the bones of its skeleton. Stagnant liquid oozes freely through its overly moist pours. A putrid smelling mucus slithers from the bullet hole in the centre of his forehead. It snakes its way down to collect in any crevice it can find. The need for the hood and cloak apparent as they soak up the constantly spewing entrails.

To describe this ghost as grotesque would be a compliment.

Ghoulish suited it better.

Everything in Sherlock’s entire being was screaming at him to get as far away as he could from the repulsive spectre before him.

Not surprisingly it already knows what is going through his mind.

Its spindly long arms strike out, wrapping themselves around the detective.

As the ghost pulls the struggling Sherlock down through the floor, he can hear Magnussen’s all-knowing slimy, smug voice in his head.

‘Knowing is owning.’

***

Christmas Eve - Future

They emerge up through the ground. Sherlock immediately untangles himself from the loathsome Magnussen.

Looking around he realises that they are in a graveyard.

Snow has just started to fall and Sherlock becomes aware that he is shivering. Given that he is still dressed in old sweatpants, t-shirt and dressing gown, with nothing on his feet. That shouldn’t be a surprise.

Except that on the two previous occasions he had been spirited away, the weather had no affect on him.

He wondered whether his ability to feel it now was good, or bad.

He turned to the ghost but it gave no indication.

Fed up, Sherlock turned to make a quick survey of his surroundings to see if it could offer up some clue.

But it told him nothing. It was just a graveyard.

In frustration he turned back to Magnussen.

“This place has no significance for me. Why did you bring me here?”

The ghost points up ahead of the consulting detective.

Sherlock turned, to see a familiar figure making her way towards him.
Molly Hooper.

Sherlock quickly deduces from the streaks of grey through her hair and the lines on her face that he has been brought to the future.

Ten years in the future was his best guess.

Just as she comes level with him, Molly stops before one of the graves and begins to speak.

“If you could see me now, you’d probably laugh at me, talking to your grave,” she started off self-consciously. “Though it wouldn’t be the first time. John…” her words fade away.

The significance hits Sherlock hard, and his legs almost give way under him.

She is standing in front of his grave. And this time he really is dead.

Sherlock watched as Molly wiped away tears that had started to fall.

“I’m sorry it’s taken me so long to visit you. I’ve wanted to, more than you can ever know. But it was just too hard, and the longer I left it the harder it became. So I took the cowards way out and I stayed away.”

She stops to compose herself.

When she speaks again there is a bite to her words. She is clearly annoyed with him.

Sherlock can’t help grinning, certain that if she could see him, this would be one of those times she would feel compelled to slap him.

“You’re a bloody fool Sherlock, do you know that,” she began. “What were you thinking? Were you high? And yes I know the toxicology report came back negative.” Tears started to flow again, but this time they were of anger. “Why did you have to go to that bank robbery on your own. Mycroft got the impression you were only saying you were interested in the case so that you could get out of going to John and Mary’s party. Greg confirmed that you’d sent him a text telling him it wasn’t worth your time.” She paused to blow her nose.


And then he remembered what he had witnessed at the party. Lestrade getting a call about an innocent bystander being shot.

The bystander had been him.

Which meant…

“I kept my promise to you Sherlock,” she said. “Remember? You made me promise that if you were to die, that I would be the one to perform your autopsy.”

Sherlock closed his eyes briefly. It had been a cruel request to make of her. It wasn’t like she hadn’t done more than she should for him.

Yet he kept on asking, knowing she would agree to any request he made of her.

“Do you know what I discovered Sherlock?” she asked. “You had a heart Sherlock. I know this for a fact because I held it in my hands. It may have stopped beating, but I can assure you, you did have one.” Sighing she continued. “If only you’d learned to trust it. To not see sentiment, feelings and
love as weaknesses but as strengths, you might still be with us today.”

Sherlock found it increasingly difficult to listen to what Molly had to say.

He found it curious that this ghost in particular was apparently so disinterested, which was at complete odds to how it had been in life.

He glanced over at the hooded figure, but it remained where it stood.

It then occurred to Sherlock that this time round he was on his own. This time it was up to him. How he chose to handle this situation could well decide his fate when he was returned to his own timeline.

His attention was diverted when Molly spoke again.

“I shouldn’t get at you for making a stupid decision. I’m just as guilty.”

Sherlock frowned.

“I was so devastated by your death,” she explained to his grave. “I reconnected with Tom. And this time I married him.” She looked down sadly at the wedding band on her finger. “You should never marry someone you know you’ll never love. Especially when you know he knows.”

Molly took a deep breath. “This is my first and last visit Sherlock. But know that you are always in my heart.”

She pressed her fingers to her lips, and then placed her fingers to his headstone. She then turned to leave.

Sherlock purposefully stood in her way. He needed to share the pain she was feeling. He wanted to understand it. He owed her that.

As Molly passed right through him, the pain he felt was excruciating. It was like nothing he had ever felt before. Not even when he lost Redbeard. It was like all his internal organs had stopped one at a time.

He lost consciousness as he fell forward towards his grave.

***
The End of It

Chapter Summary

Sherlock Holmes receives some unwanted visitors on Christmas Eve. Each comes with a valuable lesson about forgiveness, friendship and love.

Disclaimer: I don’t own any of these characters. I just like to play with them every now and then.

A debt of thanks must go to Charles Dickens for this wonderful blueprint that I have used for this particular story.

***

Christmas Eve

Sherlock’s eyes opened slowly. He raised his head to peer blearily about him. His eyes initially refuse to focus. So he rubs them with a weary hand, he then blinks once, twice. Finally he shakes his head in an effort to clear it.

He finds that he is lying on the floor in the living room of his flat. And the flat is in complete darkness.

Time has moved on.

Sherlock gets to his feet. His flat is back to how it was before the arrival of the ghosts. He checks the time, then hurriedly puts on his shoes and pulls his Belstaff over his dressing gown before rushing down the stairs and out the front door.

***

The Watson’s Christmas Eve party was in full swing when Sherlock burst through the door.

Everyone looked at the Consulting Detective in amazement.

There he stood in a full Santa suit, minus beard and padding. A sack full of presents over one shoulder.

Suddenly feeling a little self-conscious, Sherlock cleared his throat. “Sorry I’m a bit late,” he apologised.

John walked up to his friend and hugged him warmly. “Better late than never mate,” he assured him.

Sherlock gave a small but genuine smile as he returned the hug, much to his and everyone else’s surprise.

“Can I take those?” John asked, indicating the presents. “I’ll put them with the others.”

Sherlock nodded, but quickly grabbed the big pink teddy bear before making his way over to the baby’s bassinette.
He leaned over, gently placing the bear next to Amanda, who squealed with delight.

As she had done when Sherlock had come with the Ghost of Christmas Present, Amanda stretched her arms out towards him.

This time Sherlock reached down and gathered her up in his arms. He gave her a brief, if awkward hug before placing her carefully back down.

As he passed Mary, he stopped to kiss her on the cheek.

He next walked over to his mother and had a quiet word with her.

Mrs Holmes eyes filled with tears, tears of joy as she and Sherlock embraced. He then shook hands with his father and brother.

Next he approached Lestrade, accepting his bear hug with good grace. He then shakes hands with a shocked Donovan and a pleased Anderson.

Mrs Hudson received a brief kiss on the cheek, and a kind word.

Sherlock swallowed nervously as he approached Molly, who had stood silently observing him as he made his way around the room.

He put his hand in the jacket pocket of the Santa suit and pulled out the little box he had placed there.

He stopped when they were standing almost toe-to-toe.

Molly looked up at him, waiting patiently.

“Molly,” he began.

‘You’ve always been the one to see right through me. No matter how badly I’ve treated you, you’ve always been there for me. I have no words to describe what I feel for you. I’ve always tried to dismiss them. It goes without saying that I’ll be rubbish at a relationship with you. I’ll disappoint, hurt and anger you more often than not. I don’t do romance. Don’t see the point of dating…’

Molly reached up and kissed him softly on the lips.

“Yes Sherlock,” she said with a smile.

“Yes?” he asked, momentarily confused.

Molly grinned. “Yes, I’ll marry you.”

Sherlock let out a sigh of relief. He quickly removed the diamond ring from its box and placed it on her finger.

It was a perfect fit. Of course.

For those who witnessed this exchange, they would feel rightly confused by what they had observed.

All they heard of Sherlock’s declaration was ‘Molly’. The rest he had not spoken aloud.

It was fortunate for him then that the only person who mattered the most to him had heard his silent words loud and clear.
As it was, at that very moment the consulting detective and his pathologist were currently oblivious to everyone else in the room.

Sherlock pulled Molly into his arms. Resting his forehead against hers, he looked deep into her eyes as he whispered a heartfelt “Thank you.”

Molly wrapped her arms securely around him. “You’re welcome,” she replied.

***

So did Sherlock Holmes learn the lessons set him by the ghosts from the past, present and future?

I have it on good authority the Consulting Detective was never again visited by supernatural spirits. From what I hear the high-functioning sociopath was far too busy to fall back into his former destructive ways.

But he still behaves as is expected of him. All for appearances of course.

***
Epilogue

Chapter Summary

Sherlock Holmes receives some unwanted visitors on Christmas Eve. Each comes with a valuable lesson about forgiveness, friendship and love.

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Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

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Christmas Eve... Seven Years Later

“But Daddy!” Six-year old Elizabeth, looking beseechingly with her big, brown eyes while four-year old William’s aqua coloured eyes brimmed with fat tears that threatened to overflow at any moment as his little chin quivered tremulously. Both children aimed their well-honed arsenal towards their target, looking pleadingly at their father. “It’s a family Christmas tradition.”

Sherlock rolled his eyes and turned to his wife as she entered their children’s bedroom looking for support.

“Don’t look at me,” Molly said with a grin. “You’re the one who started it.”

Sherlock pouted.

“And anyway,” she continued encouragingly as she stretched up on her toes, placing one hand around the back of his neck before placing a soft kiss upon his lips. “I’m rather fond of this particular tradition.”

Sherlock sighed dramatically putting on a show of reluctance, which was marred when he scooped up his daughter in his arms. Lizzie squealed with delight as he flopped them both on the nearest bed. He dragged Molly who was carrying Will in her arms down next to him, before pulling her in close.

It takes a bit of manoeuvring, but eventually the two adults, with two excited children on their laps are settled on the single bed.

As Molly rests her head on his shoulder, Sherlock leaned down to press a gentle kiss on her forehead before reaching out for the book he had already placed on the bedside table.

“Are we sitting comfortably?” he asked.

Everyone nodded.
“Then I shall begin.”

He opened the book and began to read aloud. ‘Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it: and Scrooge’s name was good upon ‘Change, for anything he choose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a doornail…’

***

Chapter End Notes

Merry Christmas Everyone!

In Chapter 3 I make reference to why Redbeard was put down. I am not in the least bit medical, so what I have stated may be far from accurate.

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