



## The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez

### B1 Version

#### Part 1: A Death at Yoxley Old Place

On a wild, stormy November night, Inspector Stanley Hopkins arrived at Baker Street soaking wet, desperate for Holmes's help. He had just returned from Yoxley Old Place, a country house in Kent — the county to the south-east of London — where a young man named Willoughby Smith had been murdered.

Smith had been the private secretary — a personal assistant who writes letters and manages paperwork — to Professor Coram, an elderly invalid who rarely left his bed. That morning, the housemaid had heard a terrible cry from the study below. She found Smith lying on the floor with a deep wound to the side of his neck: a small sealing-wax knife — the kind used to melt wax and seal envelopes, with an ivory handle and a stiff blade — had pierced his carotid artery, the large blood vessel in the neck. He died within moments, but before losing consciousness he murmured: 'The professor — it was she.' In his outstretched right hand he clutched a pair of golden pince-nez — a type of glasses that clip onto the nose instead of having arms over the ears — with two broken pieces of black silk cord.

Hopkins had examined the grounds and found faint traces of footsteps on the grass border beside the garden path, suggesting someone had avoided the path deliberately.

There were no clear impressions, but someone had definitely come and gone. The study had not been robbed. Professor Coram, still in his bed, claimed to know nothing.

## **Part 2: Holmes Reads the Glasses**

Holmes took the pince-nez and examined them minutely under the lamp. From them alone he constructed a detailed description of the unknown visitor. The lenses were very thick and concave — meaning they corrected extremely short sight. The clips that held the glasses on the nose were very wide apart, indicating a broad, flat nose. The cork padding on one clip was newer than the other, suggesting the glasses had been repaired recently. The mounting was solid gold, indicating a woman of some wealth and refinement.

Holmes wrote out his description: a woman of good address — meaning well-dressed and from a respectable background — with a thick nose, eyes set wide apart, a puckered forehead, a peering expression, rounded shoulders, and very poor sight. He added that she had visited an optician — an eye specialist — at least twice recently, and that tracing her through London's limited number of opticians should be straightforward.

## **Part 3: The Cigarettes**

The next morning Holmes and Watson travelled to Yoxley Old Place. Holmes examined the garden path, the study, and then paid a long visit to Professor Coram's bedroom. The professor was a gaunt, white-haired Russian man who chain-smoked strong Egyptian cigarettes — smoking one after another all day. Holmes accepted several cigarettes and smoked them with what seemed like excessive enthusiasm, dropping ash across the floor in front of a particular bookcase.

During a conversation with the housekeeper, Holmes discovered something curious: despite the murder the previous day, Professor Coram had eaten a remarkably large breakfast and ordered an excellent lunch — the appetite, Holmes noted, of a man feeding not just himself.

After lunch, Holmes tipped over the cigarette box deliberately, scattering cigarettes across the floor. As everyone bent to retrieve them, Holmes glanced at the ash he had dropped earlier and saw, in the trail of ash, the faint mark of a shoe — someone had come out of the bookcase area while he and Hopkins had stepped out of the room. He announced that he had solved the case.

## **Part 4: The Woman in the Bookcase**

Holmes pointed to a tall bookcase in the corner. The old professor clutched the arms of his chair. Then the bookcase swung open on a hidden hinge — it was a secret door concealing a small hidden space. A woman stepped out, pale and dust-covered, clearly very short-sighted without her glasses. She had the exact physical appearance Holmes had deduced from the pince-nez.

She identified herself as the professor's wife. He was not English at all — he was Russian, and his real name she refused to give. Years earlier, in a Russian university city, both had been members of a revolutionary group — people who wanted to

overthrow the tsar's government. The professor had betrayed the entire group to the police in order to save himself and collect a reward. Many were hanged or sent to Siberia — the vast frozen territory in eastern Russia used as a place of punishment and forced labour. She had been one of those sent to Siberia, but her sentence was not for life.

Among the group had been a man she loved deeply — an idealist named Alexis who had always urged against violence, and whose letters would have proved his innocence. The professor had stolen both her diary and Alexis's letters, and used them to have him convicted. Alexis was now in a salt mine in Siberia.

She had spent years tracking her husband down. She hired a private detective who got a position as the professor's first secretary — the one who had left abruptly — and discovered that the documents were in the locked bureau. She came to retrieve them. Willoughby Smith walked in and grabbed her. She snatched the nearest object — the sealing-wax knife — and stabbed wildly to make him release her. She had not meant to kill him. She fled into the corridor, took the wrong turning, and ended up in the professor's bedroom rather than the garden exit.

There, she threatened her husband: if he gave her to the police, she would give him to the revolutionary Brotherhood, whose members would execute him within days. He hid her behind the bookcase, fed her from his own meals, and waited for the police to leave. She now drew a small packet from her dress — the letters and diary that would free Alexis — and handed it to Holmes, asking him to deliver it to the Russian Embassy. Then she swallowed poison she had been carrying. Holmes tried to stop her, but it was too late.