



The Adventure of the Priory School

A2 Version

Part 1: A Collapse at Baker Street

A large, important-looking man comes to Baker Street. His name is Dr. Huxtable. He runs the Priory School — a boarding school for boys from rich and noble families, in the north of England. A boarding school is one where the pupils live at the school, not at home.

Dr. Huxtable walks through the door and falls unconscious on the floor. Watson says he is simply exhausted — he has not eaten and has been travelling since very early in the morning.

When Huxtable recovers, he explains the problem. A ten-year-old boy called Lord Saltire has disappeared from the school. He is the only son of the Duke of Holderness — one of the richest and most powerful men in England. The boy's parents have separated. His mother now lives in France. The boy was sad about this, but he had been happy at the school. Then, one night, he vanished. The German teacher, Heidegger, has also disappeared, along with his bicycle. Three days have passed with no news.

The Duke is offering five thousand pounds to find his son, and one thousand pounds to name whoever took him. Holmes agrees to travel north immediately.

Part 2: Clues on the Moor

Holmes, Watson, and Huxtable arrive at the school. The Duke is there with his private secretary, a nervous young man called James Wilder. The Duke is tall, cold, and formal, with a long red beard.

The next morning, Holmes and Watson search the moorland — the open, flat, treeless countryside of peat and heather north of the school. They find two sets of bicycle tracks on a wet path.

The first tracks are from Heidegger's bicycle. Holmes follows them and finds spots of blood on the plants nearby. Further along, the bicycle is hidden in a bush, covered in blood. Nearby, Heidegger is lying dead. He has been struck very hard on the head. Someone killed him.

The second set of tracks comes from a different bicycle and leads toward a large house called Holderness Hall. Holmes also notices what look like the footprints of cattle. But he has not seen a single cow all morning.

Part 3: The Fighting Cock Inn

Holmes follows the tracks toward a run-down country inn called the Fighting Cock. An inn is a place in the countryside where people can drink and sometimes stay overnight. The landlord is a rude, unpleasant man called Reuben Hayes.

Holmes pretends he has hurt his ankle and tries to get a horse or bicycle from Hayes. Hayes refuses to help. But Holmes notices something important: the horses have new nails in their shoes, put there very recently. There is also a forge at the back — a workshop for making and shaping metal objects, using a very hot fire.

Holmes also sees James Wilder cycling toward the inn with a frightened face. A little later, a horse and cart races away toward the nearest town. That night, Wilder stands at the door waiting for someone. A second person arrives. A lamp is lit upstairs.

Holmes climbs onto Watson's shoulders to look through the upstairs window. He does not say what he sees. He sends telegrams from the station and promises that the mystery will be solved by the next evening.

Part 4: The Cow-Shoe Trick

The next morning Holmes solves the puzzle of the cattle tracks. A cow walks in one way. It does not trot or canter like a horse. But these tracks show all three gaits — walking, trotting, and running. They were not made by cows at all.

The tracks were made by horses wearing special iron shoes shaped like a cow's hoof — the divided foot of an animal like a cow or deer — instead of the normal round shape of a horse's shoe. This was an old trick used to confuse anyone following the tracks. The shoes were later found in a display case at Holderness Hall, labelled as old objects from the Middle Ages. But they had fresh mud on them.

Now the picture is clear. The boy left the school at night on horseback with a companion, using these disguised shoes to hide their tracks. Heidegger saw them from his window and chased after them on his bicycle. The companion turned back and struck Heidegger dead. Then they took the boy to the Fighting Cock Inn.

Part 5: The Duke's Secret

Holmes and Watson go to Holderness Hall. Holmes asks to speak with the Duke alone. He sends James Wilder out of the room. Then he tells the Duke what he knows: the boy is at the Fighting Cock Inn, and he knows who arranged the kidnapping.

The Duke tells the truth. James Wilder is not just his secretary. He is the Duke's secret son — born before the Duke married. The Duke could not tell anyone about him publicly, but he educated him and gave him a job. James always knew the secret. He hated Lord Saltire, the legitimate heir, because James believed he should have inherited everything.

James made a plan. He opened a letter from the Duke to the boy and added a false note, using the mother's name. The note asked the boy to come to a nearby wood at midnight, promising that a horse would take him to his mother in France. The boy believed it and went. Reuben Hayes was waiting with a horse. Hayes took the boy to the inn. When Heidegger chased them, Hayes killed him.

James planned to bargain with his father: return the boy in exchange for changing the inheritance laws so James could receive the estate. But when Heidegger's body was found, James panicked and confessed to the Duke. The Duke — weakly — gave James three days to let Hayes escape before telling the police. He visited his son secretly at night but did not bring him home.

Part 6: Holmes Decides

Holmes is direct and honest with the Duke. He says the Duke has done something seriously wrong. He hid a murder. He helped a killer escape. And he left his innocent ten-year-old son in a dangerous place for three days to protect a guilty man. The Duke says nothing, because he knows Holmes is right.

Holmes has one condition for helping. He rings the bell himself and orders the Duke's carriage to go immediately to the Fighting Cock Inn and bring Lord Saltire home.

When the boy is safe, Holmes explains what he will do. Hayes will be arrested and tried for murder. Holmes will not protect him. But the Duke can make sure Hayes has no reason to talk about James Wilder's part in the plan. The police will think Hayes acted alone, for money. James Wilder must leave England forever and go to Australia.

Holmes also suggests that the Duke write to the Duchess and try to repair their marriage. The Duke says he has already written to her that morning.

Holmes accepts the cheque for six thousand pounds with a smile. He calls himself a poor man as he puts it in his pocket. As a final question, he asks about the cow-shoes. He checks them and finds fresh mud on the iron. He says they are the second most

interesting thing he has seen on this visit. The Duke asks what the first is. Holmes smiles, touches the cheque in his pocket, and says nothing.