



## The Adventure of the Second Stain

### A2 Version

#### Part 1: A Stolen Letter

Two of the most important men in Britain come to Baker Street. One is the Prime Minister — the head of the government. The other is Trelawney Hope, the minister responsible for relations with other countries in Europe.

A letter has been stolen. A foreign ruler wrote it in very angry and careless language about Britain. If the letter is published, Britain and that country will almost certainly go to war. The letter was kept in a locked metal box in Hope's bedroom. Last night it disappeared.

Holmes identifies three possible thieves — international secret agents in London. One of them is named Eduardo Lucas. He lives near Hope's house in Westminster.

#### Part 2: A Murder

Before Holmes can investigate, Watson shows him the morning newspaper. Eduardo Lucas was stabbed to death last night. Holmes is certain the murder and the theft are connected.

Then Hope's wife, Lady Hilda, arrives at Baker Street. She is beautiful, but clearly anxious. She asks Holmes if the loss of the letter will damage her husband's career. Holmes says it will be very serious. She asks Holmes not to tell her husband she came. Then she leaves.

Holmes notices that she stood with the light behind her, so he could not read her face easily. She asked about consequences, not about the letter itself. He is suspicious.

### Part 3: The Turned Carpet

Three days pass. Then Inspector Lestrade asks Holmes to come to Lucas's house. When the police lifted the small square carpet on the floor, they found something strange. The blood from the murder had soaked through the carpet, as expected. But there is no stain on the white wooden floor below. Instead, there is a second stain a short distance away. If the carpet is turned around, the two stains match perfectly. Someone turned the carpet after the murder.

Holmes sends Lestrade to question the police constable who was guarding the room. The moment Lestrade leaves, Holmes lifts the carpet, finds a secret compartment in the floor, and opens it. It is empty. Someone has already taken what was inside.

The constable admits that a tall, well-dressed young woman came the previous evening. She looked at the bloodstain and fainted. While the constable fetched brandy, she recovered, turned the carpet, opened the secret compartment, took the letter, and left.

### Part 4: The Truth

Holmes goes to Hope's house and speaks to Lady Hilda. He tells her calmly that he knows she gave the letter to Lucas, and that she later went back to his house and took it from its hiding place. She falls to her knees.

She explains. Years ago, before her marriage, she wrote a private letter to a man she admired. It was not a terrible letter, but her husband is a man of very high principles and would never forgive it. Lucas found the letter and used it to blackmail her — to force her to do something by threatening to reveal a secret. He told her: bring me the diplomatic letter from your husband's box, or I will show your letter to him. She made a copy of her husband's key and took the letter to Lucas. He gave her back her own letter. Then his wife arrived and stabbed him.

Lady Hilda took back the diplomatic letter while the constable was away. She did not know what to do with it.

Holmes acts very quickly. He takes the despatch-box, hides the diplomatic letter inside among the other papers, locks it, and puts it back. When Hope and the Prime Minister open the box together a few minutes later, they find the letter. They believe it was overlooked all along.

The danger of war is over. Hope's career is safe. Lady Hilda's secret is kept. As Holmes leaves, the Prime Minister smiles and says he thinks there is more to this than meets

the eye. Holmes smiles, picks up his hat, and says only: 'We also have our diplomatic secrets.'