



## The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist

*Simplified from the original story by Arthur Conan Doyle*

### Version 2: CEFR A2 — Elementary

*Short sentences. Simple vocabulary. All key plot points included.*

#### **Part 1: A Visitor Comes to Baker Street**

Sherlock Holmes was a famous detective who lived in London. His friend Dr. Watson helped him with his cases.

One evening, a young woman came to see Holmes. Her name was Violet Smith. She was tall, beautiful, and very worried.

Holmes looked at her carefully before she spoke. He saw marks on her shoes from a bicycle pedal. He saw that her fingertips were slightly flat, which happens to people who play music regularly. 'You ride a bicycle,' he said, 'and you are a music teacher.' He was right about both.

Violet told her story. Her father was dead. She and her mother had no money. Then one day they saw an advertisement in a newspaper. A lawyer was looking for them. They

went to his office and met two men who had just returned from South Africa: Mr. Carruthers and Mr. Woodley.

The men said that Violet's uncle, Ralph Smith, had died in South Africa. He had asked them to find his family and help them.

Mr. Woodley was unpleasant and aggressive. He said horrible things to Violet and would not leave her alone. But Mr. Carruthers was polite and kind. He offered Violet a well-paid job teaching music to his young daughter at his country house near Farnham, which is a town about fifty kilometres south-west of London. Violet could go home to London every weekend. She accepted.

For a while, everything was fine. Then Woodley came to visit for a week. One evening he grabbed Violet and would not let her go. Carruthers pulled him away. Woodley was so angry that he punched Carruthers, his own host, in the face. After that, Woodley left.

### ***Part 2: The Man on the Bicycle***

But Violet had come to Holmes because of something strange. Every Saturday she cycled alone along a quiet country road to the station. The road passed near an old house called Charlington Hall.

For several weeks, a man on a bicycle had been following her along this road. He always stayed about two hundred metres behind her. He had a dark beard. She could not see his face clearly. When she slowed down, he slowed down. When she stopped, he stopped.

Once she turned her bicycle around quickly and rode straight at him. He immediately turned and rode away as fast as he could. When she looked back a moment later, he had completely disappeared, even though there were no other roads nearby. Holmes decided the man must have gone through a gap in a hedge and into the grounds of Charlington Hall.

Holmes asked Violet if anyone had romantic feelings for her. She mentioned Woodley. Then she said, a little embarrassed, that she thought her employer Mr. Carruthers might have feelings for her too, but he had never said anything inappropriate. She was also engaged — planning to marry — a man named Cyril Morton, who was an electrical engineer working in another city.

Holmes noticed three strange things. First, why did the cyclist only appear on that one section of road? Second, why were two such different men as Carruthers and Woodley both interested in finding Violet's poor uncle? Third, why did Carruthers pay Violet such a high salary, but not own a horse or carriage, even though he lived six miles from the station?

### ***Part 3: Watson and Holmes Investigate***

Holmes was busy with other work, so he sent Watson to the area to watch. Watson hid on the heath, which is open land covered with low bushes and wild plants. He saw the bearded man arrive from the direction of Charlington Hall and hide just inside the hedge. When Violet came cycling past, the man followed her. When she turned to face him, he rode away fast and went back through the hedge into the Hall grounds.

Watson noticed that when the man returned to the Hall entrance, he paused for a moment with his hands raised near his face. Watson thought he was adjusting his tie. This detail would become very important later.

Watson asked an estate agent — a business that rents houses — who lived at the Hall. He was told a man named Williamson had rented it. Holmes was not very impressed. He said Watson should have asked at the local pub, where people would know all the local gossip.

Holmes went down himself the following week. At the pub he found out that Williamson was an old man with white hair and a white beard. He had once been a clergyman, a man whose job is to lead church services and perform religious ceremonies, but he had been removed from that position because of dishonest behaviour. Every weekend, rough and noisy guests came to stay at the Hall. Woodley was always among them.

While Holmes was talking to the pub landlord, Woodley came in and heard everything. He attacked Holmes without warning. Holmes was a very good boxer and won the fight, but he returned to London with a cut lip and a bruise on his head.

Then Violet wrote to Holmes with more news. Carruthers had asked her to marry him. She had said no. The house felt uncomfortable now. Then Woodley appeared again near the house — bruised from his fight with Holmes and looking frightening. Violet decided to leave her job and go back to London permanently the following Saturday.

#### ***Part 4: Kidnapped***

Holmes felt that Saturday would be dangerous. He and Watson travelled down early that morning to make sure Violet was safe.

They arrived on the road just in time to see a horse-drawn carriage, called a dog-cart, coming towards them with no driver. The horse was running freely. The reins — the long straps used to control the horse — were hanging loose. There was no sign of Violet.

Holmes understood immediately that Violet had been kidnapped. He and Watson jumped into the dog-cart and drove it quickly back along the road. They met a man on a bicycle coming towards them fast. He stopped them at gunpoint. He demanded to know where the carriage had come from.

Holmes explained what had happened. The man said he knew where Violet was. Woodley and 'a fake church minister' had taken her. He led Holmes and Watson through a gap in the hedge into the grounds of Charlington Hall.

#### ***Part 5: The Forced Marriage***

Near the hedge they found a young stable boy — a boy who worked with horses — lying unconscious on the ground. He had been knocked off the carriage and beaten. They ran further into the grounds.

They came to a clearing — an open area in the middle of the trees. There they saw a terrible scene. Violet was standing against a tree with a cloth tied around her mouth to stop her from screaming. Woodley stood nearby, looking very pleased with himself. An

elderly man wearing a surplice — the long white robe worn by a clergyman — had just finished a marriage ceremony. He was putting his prayer book away and congratulating Woodley.

The man who had guided Holmes and Watson then pulled off his dark beard, which had been a disguise all along. He was Mr. Carruthers. He raised a gun and shot Woodley, who fell to the ground wounded. Holmes immediately pointed his own gun at the old man in the white robe.

### ***Part 6: The Truth***

When the local police arrived, Holmes explained what had been happening. Carruthers and Woodley had known Violet's uncle Ralph Smith in South Africa. He was dying and had no will — no legal document saying who should receive his money after his death. Violet was his closest relative, so she would inherit everything. Their plan was to marry her quickly so that one of them could control her money.

On the ship back to England, they had played a card game to decide who would marry her. Woodley won. But when they got to England, Violet refused to have anything to do with Woodley. Carruthers gave her a job in his house so that Woodley could try to court her. But Carruthers then fell genuinely in love with Violet himself and stopped wanting to help Woodley.

Woodley was furious. He went ahead with his plan alone. He found Williamson, the old disgraced clergyman, to perform a fake wedding ceremony. He got a marriage licence by tricking the authorities.

Carruthers knew Woodley was dangerous. He followed Violet on his bicycle every time she passed near the Hall. He wore a fake beard so she would not recognise him. When Watson had seen him 'adjusting his tie' at the Hall gate, Carruthers was actually taking off his fake beard before going inside. The telegram Carruthers received, saying 'The old man is dead,' told him Ralph Smith had died and Woodley would act soon.

Holmes explained that the forced marriage was not legal. First, Williamson had been removed from his position and no longer had the right to marry people. Second, British law says that a marriage done by force is not a real marriage at all.

### ***Ending***

Woodley and Williamson were both sent to prison — Woodley for ten years and Williamson for seven. Carruthers was punished less severely because the court recognised he had tried to protect Violet in the end.

Violet inherited her uncle's large fortune. She married Cyril Morton, the man she had loved all along.