

The Three Students



Part 1

Who copied the exam questions?

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson were in one of England's most famous university towns doing some research. One evening, Holmes received a visit from an old **acquaintance**, Mr Hilton Soames, a tutor at one of the colleges. Mr Soames looked very nervous and **agitated**.

'I hope you can spare me some of your valuable time, Mr Holmes. Something very serious has happened at my college.'

Holmes was very busy. 'Why don't you call the police?' he said **irritably**.



‘No, no that’s impossible. We can’t have a **scandal** at the college. I must explain. You see, tomorrow is the first day of the university examinations, and this afternoon I received the Greek translation papers. I put them on the desk in my room while I went to have tea with a friend. When I returned, I saw immediately that the papers had been **disturbed**. Indeed some were lying on the floor by the window.’

‘I see,’ said Holmes. ‘Please continue.’

‘Well, at first I thought that perhaps my servant, Bannister, was responsible because he’d been in the room after I left, but he denied touching the papers and I believe him. He is a good and honest man. I examined the room very carefully.’

‘And what did you find?’ asked Holmes impatiently.

‘On the table by the window I found a broken pencil. Also, there was a cut, about three inches long, in the red leather top of my desk and next to it, a small **lump** of black mud. There were no signs of entry at the window. Please help me, Mr Holmes. Someone must have copied the exam questions. If I don’t find who did it, I will have to cancel the exam and there will be a scandal.’

‘We need to visit your room,’ said Holmes. ‘Come on, Watson.’

Part 2

Looking for clues

They walked towards the tutor’s room, which was on the ground floor. Holmes tried to look in through the window but he wasn’t tall enough. He had to stop and **stand on tiptoe**. Above lived three students, one on each floor. Holmes entered the room and examined the carpet.



‘Nothing,’ he said. ‘Let me look at the table by the window. Ah, yes, I see what might have happened. Someone took the papers from your desk over to the window table to copy them, because from there he could see when you were returning.’

‘Actually, Holmes, nobody could see me. I came back through the side door.’

‘Ah, so you may have surprised him and he had to leave hurriedly. Did you hear someone running away as you entered?’

‘No, I didn’t.’

‘Interesting. So, our only clues are the cut in the leather and one small lump of black mud. Now tell me, where does that door go to?’

‘My bedroom.’

‘Can I examine it?’

‘Yes, of course.’

Holmes followed Soames into his bedroom.

‘Hello,’ said Holmes, ‘What’s this? Another small lump of black mud, exactly like the one on the desk. Clearly your visitor came into the bedroom.’

‘I don’t understand. Why did he do that?’

‘Well, when you came back so suddenly, he must have run into your bedroom to hide. Look at the bedroom window, it’s open. That must be how he escaped.’



Part 3

The three suspects

‘Now,’ said Holmes, ‘The three students who live above you. Are they all taking this examination?’

‘Yes.’

‘Tell me about them.’

‘Well, on the first floor is Gilchrist, an excellent student and an athlete, he plays rugby and cricket and is particularly good at the long jump. He’s hard-working but poor. His father gambled away all the family money.’

‘And the second floor?’

‘Daulat Ras lives there. He is from India, very quiet and hard-working, but Greek translation is his weakest subject. And finally there’s Miles McLaren on the top floor. A very intelligent student, one of the best when he chooses to work – but he’s been very lazy this term, he’s been playing cards until late at night and I think he must be worried about this exam.’

‘Now tell me,’ said Holmes, ‘how tall are these young men?’

‘How tall? What a strange question. Erm ... I think Miles is taller than the Indian, but Gilchrist is the tallest, over six feet.’

‘Ah, that’s important. Now, Mr Soames. I wish you goodnight. I’ll return tomorrow.’

Next morning Sherlock Holmes left his house at 6 a.m. He returned at 8 a.m. to pick up Watson and they made their way to the tutor’s rooms. Mr Soames was waiting nervously for them.