



## The Essential Case File : The Legacy of Sherlock Holmes

Shirley would never forget the day that she discovered the secret of the trunk in the attic. The trunk, made of mahogany, was covered with intricate carvings of exotic plants and animals. Shirley had always wondered what could possibly be inside such a fascinating object. She had asked her Gran a few years before, but even she wasn't really sure where the chest had come from, except to say that she had a feeling that her husband may have inherited it from a distant relative.

What had always made Shirley the most curious though was the fact that the trunk was locked and nobody - not Gran or her Dad, had any idea where the key might be. And Shirley was sure she could never just break in to such a lovely piece of furniture.

It was not until her twelfth birthday that Shirley gave the trunk another thought. As she woke that morning, light streamed into the attic, where she had fallen asleep the night before while working on a new fertilizer for her Gran's azaleas. The sunlight danced on the window panes, reflecting off something in the corner of the room. As she roused herself from her slumber she noticed that the offending object was on the front of a rather old trunk. As she examined the trunk closer her attention was focused on the worn brass plate on the front. On it was etched a series of letters in the Cyrillic alphabet, followed by the numbers 14551485. Shirley could remember assuming once that it was just a manufacturer's code, but for some reason as she looked closer at the scratched, metallic surface this morning, her heart beat a little faster .....

As she leant in, she noticed that all the letters \*weren't\* Cyrillic at all - she could recognise some Greek and Arabic as well. Excited, she set to work deciphering the symbols. When she had finished, there was a short, cryptic sentence in English : 'Look for clue in 14551485.'

Shirley's mind raced. What could the numbers mean ? She sat at her desk and took out her computer. Entering the numbers onto the screen, she sat and stared. Manipulating them, she looked for patterns. Nothing. She tried multiplying, adding, subtracting, but that didn't seem to make any sense either. She couldn't crack the code. She looked forlornly over towards Watson, lying lazily on the couch, but he merely raise his head to her as if to say ' What do you expect me to do ?' It appeared to Shirley that Watson may have had the right idea. What indeed !

Looking back at the screen one last time, she stared at the numbers again. 'What could they mean ?' she thought to herself. And suddenly, she remembered something from Mr Howie's history class last week. Jumping up from her chair she leaped over to the bookcase and pulled down a history book from the top shelf. Quickly flicking through the pages she found the section she was after and a satisfied grin spread across her face. "See Watson", she said, smiling to her bloodhound "Mr Howie thinks I pay no attention in class, but I only do that when he goes on and on about the Norman Invasion." Turning her attention back to the history text, she read aloud "1455 to 1485. The Wars of the Roses.

Shirley repeated that sentence to herself again. "The War of the Roses." Looking back at the brass plate on the trunk again, she pieced together what she had discovered - "Look for clue in the Wars of the Roses." Scrunching her brow, she examined the trunk once more - and noticed an ornate carving of two entwined roses on one side. Running her fingers along the design, she was both surprised and elated when a latch flipped open, revealing a secret compartment. And as she looked inside, she saw a key .....

Realising that she had been holding her breath, Shirley exhaled slowly. What could possibly be inside. She knew she was now very close to finding out. Taking the key, she inserted it and opened the lock. With both hands she slowly raised the lid, breathing quickly and with a racing heart as she did so. Looking inside, she took a moment to digest the scene before her. Instead of jewels or gold, there were a pile of old diaries, some musty clothes, a battered violin and a little case containing a pair of gold rimmed spectacles.

*The Letter*

*To the holder of this letter, my commendations. Solving the mystery of the chest required considerable deductive powers.....*

*My work has consumed my life, and I have no heir to follow in my path. But I picture you, a young man of good imagination.....*

*A few words of advice before you embark on your ambitious endeavour. Never stop observing. Your powers of observation will be your greatest asset. Assume nothing. Assumptions have led to the destruction of many near-brilliant careers. Always remember, observation, perception, imagination and deduction are the pillars upon which good detection is built.*

*Any mystery devised by mortal minds can be solved, therewith.*

*Yours faithfully,  
Sherlock Holmes.*

But the one thing that excited her the most, and the one with which she realised the meaning of her discovery, was a deerstalker hat. At that moment she knew who the trunk had belonged to - her great-great uncle, the famous detective, Sherlock Holmes.

As Shirley digested her discovery, she instinctively knew that there must be something in the chest that was meant for her. Carefully rifling through the items, she passed over ancient relics, glass bottles of foul smelling liquids, and strange, exotic weapons. Watson, curious of the aromas coming from the trunk, sidled over to Shirley. "Yes, Watson, it does smell like garbage, but there's nothing in here for you. Sorry." Watson dejectedly turned and moped back to couch. Settling on it again, he peered across to Shirley as she continued searching through the trunk. Finally, tucked in a small shelf in the lid, she discovered the letter .....

"Look Watson, I've found it." Unfolding the old paper, Shirley read the message from her ancestor. It was definitely written for her - that much was certain - but for some reason Great-uncle Sherlock seemed to be assuming that she should be a boy. Not to worry, she thought. She would prove that a niece was just as capable a detective and she resolved from that day that she would carry on the legacy of Sherlock Holmes.

Shirley Holmes, detective, was created that day, and things would never, ever, be the same again.

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Adaptation by Damon Ford, from the story contained in 'The Essential Case File'.  
Shirley Holmes Central : [http://welcome.to/shirley\\_holmes](http://welcome.to/shirley_holmes)

