

The Case of the Flying Man

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(Replace_at_with@)]

Rated PG for mild sexual innuendo

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Summary: When Tempus meets Jack the Ripper, it is the end of Utopia. An L&C / Sherlock Holmes crossover.

Please note that I have taken the liberty of moving up the publication dates of certain works of literature so that for the purposes of this story, they were published prior to 1888.

A note on my choices of orthography and vocabulary: To the best of my ability, I have tried to use the spelling and vocabulary choices appropriate to the locale of each part of the story. You may therefore see a word such as realize/realise spelled in two different ways within this story, or a particular type of abode referred to as an "apartment" in one part of the story and a "flat" in another part. Not to mention the presence or the absence of the period (full stop) after hono(u)rifics such as "Mr" or "Mrs." If I have made any solecisms with regard to British language usage, my apologies.

My thanks to my BRs Corrina (Female Hawk) and Iolanthe whose suggestions have greatly improved the story and have saved me from publishing some silly typos and embarrassing errors. My thanks, as well, to my BFF Margot who is not an L&C fan but who BR-ed the story for me anyway and who ferreted out some additional boo-boos. And finally, my thanks to my GE, the punctuation queen, Janet Owens; I had thought I knew the proper use of punctuation, but Janet taught me quite a bit in her GE-ing of this story. Any errors that still remain are, of course, my own. Disclaimer: I do not own anything from either the Lois and Clark or the Sherlock Holmes universes. In addition to borrowing characters from both universes, I have also freely borrowed phrases here and there from each of these universes. No copyright infringement is intended. This work is strictly for entertainment purposes and is not for profit.

All feedback welcome.

Prologue

Lois Lane was not the Planet's best investigative reporter for nothing. And right now, she was conducting an investigation of her favorite subject - her husband; a very hands-on investigation. In point of fact, she and Clark were snuggling on the sofa and conducting research upon each other. Clark's hands were just about to begin their own undercover assignment preparatory to a very personal expose of his wife when she pulled back suddenly.

Clark's expression rapidly changed from one of desire mixed with delight to one of concern. "Honey, what's wrong?"

"I don't know. I just feel odd; kind of like the pins and needles of a foot waking up after being asleep, only it's my whole bod--"

Lois never had the chance to finish that last sentence. Before she could do so, the world seemed to go transparent around her and she felt herself vanish into nothingness.

Clark became increasingly panicked as he watched Lois' body grow ever more transparent until she had

disappeared entirely. He frantically called out his wife's name, but received no response. He opened all of his senses, but could neither see nor hear her anywhere. He could still feel her warmth from where she had been sitting on the sofa beside him, but it was not enough to stave off the cold chill of fear that suddenly permeated him. He was just about to spin into his suit so he could search for her, when he was interrupted by a knock on the door. He raised his voice to call through the door as he hurried to answer it. "Lois? You really had me worried there! What happened?" He flung open the door; but to his great disappointment, Lois was not the person on the other side.

"Ah, Mr. Kent. Quite. I take it from what you were saying that something has happened to Miss Lane? Did she just disappear?"

It took all of Clark's restraint not to grab H.G. Wells by his lapels. "Exactly. What do you know of this? Where and when is she, and how do we get her back?"

"Oh dear. It isn't quite as simple as that. She isn't precisely anywhere or anywhen now. I'll try to explain. May I come in?"

Clark opened the door wider and gestured for Mr. Wells to be seated on the sofa where he and Lois had been so pleasantly engaged mere minutes earlier. "What do you mean she isn't exactly anywhere or anywhen? What happened to her? How do we get her back?"

"Well now, you see, it appears that Tempus has taken to a more subtle attempt at manipulating history to try to keep the two of you apart. As you know, he had not been successful in killing you when you were a baby to prevent your and Lois' descendants from ushering in Utopia. This time, he appears to have travelled back to Victorian England and influenced a notorious murderer known as 'Jack' into killing a certain young lady by the name of Charlotte Dodgson."

"A killer known as 'Jack'? As in 'Jack the Ripper'? What does that have to do with Lois?"

"Yes, that is the full name which history has bestowed upon him. In time, you see, Charlotte would have become the great, great grandmother of Miss Lane. Unfortunately, in the newly revised timeline, Jack met with her before she became a mother. By killing her, he also eliminated all of the descendants she should have had; including, I am afraid, your own dear wife."

Clark grasped onto the one hope provided by Well's explanation. "So, all we have to do is go back in time and prevent Jack from killing Charlotte, and then Lois will be restored?"

"In theory, yes. But remember that the timeline is a very fragile thing. We must not do anything ourselves which will change the timeline in other fashions."

"But wait a minute...I thought that Jack the Ripper only killed prostitutes. Surely Lois' great, great grandmother wasn't a prostitute?"

Wells blushed at the straightforward term Clark used to describe such an indelicate occupation. "Oh dear me. I would certainly hope not; but I do not know anything more about her than what I have told you, and that Jack killed her on 12th December 1888."

"Then what are we waiting for? Let's get into your time machine and stop him!"

"My dear boy, you may wish to change into attire more appropriate for the times; your current attire would draw almost as much attention in my time as your Superman suit would here."

Clark thought for a moment, spun into the

aforementioned suit, and raced out of his home. Within minutes, he had returned with an outfit which he had rented from a downtown costume shop. Although Wells, who had, after all, lived in the relevant era, realized that the outfit's cut would not look authentic upon close inspection, he deemed it good enough for their purposes. After Clark had changed into the Victorian-style suit, the two of them made their way to Wells' time machine and thence to late 19th century London. "Ah, it is good to be home; I just wish it were under better circumstances. I had set the chronolocator to the morning of December 10th, 1888, to permit us a few days to determine precisely where and when Jack will strike so that we can intercept him. But I think that we would do well to enlist the help of my country's first and foremost consulting detective."

From the notebooks of John H. Watson:

Of all of Holmes' cases, the one that involved both the most bizarre events and the most infamous villain is the one I shall call the Case of the Flying Man. Because of the sensitive nature of the story, because I am bound by certain promises of secrecy, and because I do not wish to lose the credibility I currently have with my readers, I shall ensure that this story will not be published even after my lifetime. I am recording the events herein solely for the sake of completeness in my own private journals. I intend to modify my will to include instructions for my solicitor to burn this particular journal upon the event of my death.

I shall never forget the events of that Monday. Holmes and I were finishing one of Mrs Hudson's excellent breakfasts when we heard a knock upon the door. Our good landlady announced that we had two visitors. Not long after Holmes had instructed her to show them up and to bring some tea for our guests, we saw enter our chamber a pair of gentlemen whose appearances were so mismatched as to be almost comical. The younger one was broad of chest and shoulders, well muscled, and in a new-looking suit of a rather unusual cut. He had apparently left his home in a hurry, for he had neglected to wear a hat. He was obviously trying to contain his distress. His companion was much older, much shorter of stature, wearing a suit which, while in good condition still, had obviously been worn for a while. He appeared much calmer but also much less self-confident than his companion, as was evident from the way he fiddled nervously with his bowler.

By this point in our acquaintance, I was well aware of how my friend would indulge in a display of his mental prowess by stating the results of his deductions without elucidating his train of reasoning. He claimed he did this to reassure clients that they were in competent hands as well as to put them at their ease prior to having a serious discussion with them. While I do not doubt for a minute that those are some of the reasons he did this, I have long harboured the suspicion that he also simply enjoyed receiving the acclaim of audiences who have not yet had first-hand experience with his mental legerdemain. That day was no different.

"Please, sirs, come in and make yourselves comfortable. This is my colleague, Dr Watson. He is the embodiment of discretion. Feel free to say anything before him that you would say to me alone. Watson, it would appear that you and our guests have something in common. All three of you are writers." As Holmes scrutinized the taller visitor more closely, his brows shot up in a very rare display of surprise. He quickly schooled his features into a more neutral expression as he addressed the subject of his examination.

"Although it would appear that you, sir, employ means of recording your words that are, shall we say, considerably more sophisticated than those employed by my contemporaries. I have written a monograph on the various instruments employed in recording the written word, and on how one may discern the specific writing utensils preferred by professional writers from the patterns of calluses caused by each type of instrument. I must confess, Mr Kent, that your lack of calluses is quite unique. Even more so considering that you spent much of your formative years engaged in agricultural labor."

He pretended to be unaware of the look of stunned amazement, coupled with a measure of uneasiness, on the taller visitor's face as he turned to our other guest. "But then, perhaps the fact that you are a companion to Mr Wells would help to explain at least some of these anomalies."

His speech gave me much food for thought. Why had he been so stunned by the appearance of our first guest? Why had he referred to 'my contemporaries' rather than 'our contemporaries' when addressing them? What could he mean by the anomalies being at least partially explained by Mr Kent being Mr Wells' companion? By 'Mr Wells,' did he mean 'Herbert George Wells'? If so, I must admit to having had a certain resentment that Holmes had grouped Wells into the same category as myself. I write factual accounts. I had understood Mr Wells to write fantastical stories. I had never been enamored of that genre, and at the time I thought the stories of Mr Wells to be even worse than those of Doyle. ("The Lost World," indeed. Stuff and nonsense!)

Mr Wells seemed even more flabbergasted than his companion. "I had known of your brilliant intellect, Mr Holmes, but how in the world did even you deduce all of that? My writings have gained a certain fame within some circles, but few recognize my face. How did you know our names, much less everything else you just stated? It is all completely accurate, I assure you."

Holmes chuckled slightly, "Simplicity itself. I needed only the power of observation, not deduction, to discern your name, as you have written it in the inner band of your bowler. As to the rest, were I to lead you through the process of my observations and deductions, you would agree with me that each step followed logically from the one before, until no conclusions other than the ones I have stated could be possible. However, you are obviously here on a matter in which time is of the essence. Please describe your case to me."

Was it my imagination, or did both visitors start a bit and look at each other when Holmes uttered the phrase "time is of the essence"?

Mr Wells spoke next, "You are correct, Mr Holmes, that we have come to you on a matter of considerable urgency. We have reason to believe that a Miss Charlotte Dodgson is in terrible danger from the notorious killer known as Jack, and we must contact her immediately. We need you to locate her so that we can do so."

"Indeed. If that were all there were to the case, I would refer you to the local constabulary. However, it is apparent to me that there is far more involved. And if I am to assist the both of you, I need to know everything pertinent. To begin with, Mr Kent, when are you from?"

"Excuse me?"

"Oh, come now, sir. Your attire is made of a mixed fibre combination. Although it is predominantly wool, it also contains a strengthening fibre with which I am unfamiliar. The fibre used to secure the buttons is similarly unknown to me. And I have made a study of all materials used in the

fabrication of clothing. Even more obvious is the fact that the frames of your spectacles are of a material which the world has not yet seen. Couple these observations with several others which I have made, and the obvious conclusion is that at least parts of your companion's most famous piece of speculative fiction may in fact have some basis in reality. Your secret is safe with me. So now, sirs, please enlighten me as to all of the relevant details of your case." Holmes sat back and rested his steepled fingers against his lips. His half-closed eyes belied the intensity with which he listened to the unfolding narrative.

Mr Wells and Mr Kent together related the most astonishing story I have ever heard. But although it sounded preposterous to me, Holmes' earnest consideration of it made it evident to me that he believed it to be credible. Apparently, Mr Kent came from a time over a century into the future. Lois Lane Kent, his wife, disappeared before his eyes. Mr Wells was able to trace her disappearance to the death of Miss Dodgson. As history originally unfolded, Miss Dodgson was to become Mrs Kent's ancestor; however, an evil time traveller named Tempus disrupted the timeline by ensuring that Jack kill Miss Dodgson before she were to conceive any children. Our visitors wished to prevent this from happening, and therefore came to our London. They had yet to locate Miss Dodgson, and so wished to solicit Holmes' services. Because the timeline had been altered, the precise circumstances surrounding her impending death were unclear. All that was known was that it was to occur sometime in the East End three evenings hence. They did not even know what the lady looked like.

Holmes agreed to take on the case and asked our visitors to return the following morning at the same time to discuss any developments which may have transpired. As soon as they had made their departure, Holmes summoned Wiggins to request that the Baker Street Irregulars find out all they could about Miss Dodgson. When we were once again alone, he began to transform himself to look the part of a ruffian, while explaining to me that since Jack's victims were ladies of questionable repute, he thought it likely that Miss Dodgson would be found in one of our city's less reputable neighbourhoods. His change of attire would permit him to blend into that environment and put the local denizens at their ease, the better to determine what they knew.

When the transformation was complete, he left our flat. That was the last I saw of him that day.

When Clark and Wells entered the flat at 221B Baker Street, they noticed that Holmes seemed much more subdued than he had been the day before. In point of fact, his mood reflected their own. Clark's reporter's instincts had already told him that Holmes had not met with much success, but still he had to ask, "What have you found out?"

Holmes puffed on his meerschaum before reluctantly admitting, "I have spoken to numerous people in the East End. None of them has heard the name of Miss Dodgson, much less do they know her whereabouts. I have engaged some young men to make enquiries throughout London regarding the lady in question. I expect Wiggins to report to me at any minute."

As if on cue, the Cockney strains of a teenage boy talking with Holmes' landlady in the storey below became evident to Clark's sharp ears. A minute later, there was a knock on Holmes' door, and Holmes' flatmate Dr Watson let in a scruffy street urchin.

"Allo guvnuh!"

"Wiggins, do come in. Have you anything of interest to report?"

"Me and me mates have been keeping our minces and Kings wide open, and have been asking around, but we haven't heard a single dicky about the dame. Sorry, sir."

While observing Wiggins, Clark couldn't help but reflect that the boy's energy and eagerness to please reminded him of Jimmy back at the Planet.

Clark was able to speak 347 languages, and was well versed in the variety of English known as Cockney rhyming slang. He knew perfectly well that "minces and Kings," short for "mince pies and King Lear's," meant "eyes and ears," and that "dicky (bird)" meant "word." He therefore realized that Wiggins had just indicated that he and his friends had heard nothing about Charlotte. But long-ingrained habits made him feign ignorance to help protect his secrets. Holmes gave Wiggins sufficient money to give a shilling to each of the Irregulars for their troubles, and he then instructed Wiggins to continue trying to learn anything they could about Miss Dodgson, whereupon Wiggins left the flat and raced down the stairs. Only then did Clark tell the detective, "I think the boy was using Cockney rhyming slang, but I didn't understand what he said. Had he learnt anything?"

"Absolutely nothing."

Clark grimaced as he reported on his own lack of success of the day before. "There are no leads! I have tried to chase down every governmental record I could think of, but Charlotte doesn't seem to have been born in London. There are no driver's licenses in this era. No census data. No phone books. Nothing!" He kept to himself his additional frustration at not having even enough information to find his superpowers useful in the search – after all, he had no idea what Charlotte looked like, or even how to distinguish her heartbeat or voice from those of the other residents of the city. A flyby patrol, even using his super vision and hearing, would therefore have been pointless.

Clark saw Holmes appear to meditate for a few moments and then utter, "A street name! If Jack remains consistent in his choice of victims, and if Miss Dodgson is to become his next target, then she is a lady of questionable repute. Perhaps she is known on the streets under a different name. Mr Kent, Mr Wells, have you really no idea at all what she looks like?"

Clark then recalled the other times he had travelled with Mr Wells. The previous incarnations of Lois had all looked just like her. Was it possible that Charlotte was another such incarnation? He didn't think that Mr Holmes would believe in reincarnation, and so he couched his response accordingly. "Well, she is a direct ancestor of my wife. Perhaps she looks like her. If you would lend me a pen, I can draw you a picture of Lois." Clark made four sketches. After he had given the detective and the doctor each a drawing, he gave the third to Wells and kept the fourth for himself. All then agreed to meet back at the flat at the same time the next day – the day of the intended murder. Their current lead was slim, but it was all they had.

From the notebooks of John H. Watson:

I had been most astonished by Holmes' actions. He almost never discussed an ongoing investigation. Moreover, although he always accorded his clients a professional courtesy, and even displayed a certain solicitousness to the more distraught ones, it was highly unusual for him to give his clients the respect he might give to an intellectual peer.

It was unheard of for him to collaborate with his clients in the manner which I had just seen. When I drew his attention to his actions, his only reply was, "There is more to Mr Kent than a casual observer would realise. He has some singular, remarkable peculiarities. In fact, I might even venture to say that the world has never seen the likes of him before. I believe that, although they are different, he has strengths that are in every measure equal to my own." He refused to elaborate on what those strengths might be, or what could possibly give him such singular notions. There certainly seemed nothing remarkable about Mr Kent to me, aside, of course, from his being from the future.

Holmes and I spent the remainder of that day in the seamier areas of London showing the sketches to everyone who would speak with us; all to no avail. Apparently the time travellers had met with no better success. It was with heavy hearts that we met our clients the following morning.

Holmes decided to try another approach. "Perhaps we could learn more of Miss Dodgson if we were to know more about your wife's ancestors. Mr Kent, please tell us all that you may know of her lineage."

A rueful expression flitted across our client's face. "Lois doesn't have a good relationship with her family, so she never concerned herself with genealogy. Her parents are Sam and Ellen Lane. I think Ellen's maiden name was 'Baker'. She has a sister named 'Lucy'. That's about all I know...Oh, wait a minute! I once asked Lois how she came by her first name. She mentioned Ellen's great grandmother 'Louise Carroll' had been an actress and singer who had become famous in the time of King Edward. Ellen wanted to name my wife 'Louise' after their ancestor, but Sam refused. He had said that the name sounded too much like "wheeze," and he didn't want to give his daughter a name that sounded like a symptom he might treat. They compromised by changing the name to 'Lois'."

Holmes jerked to attention at the name 'Louise Carroll'. "I am an idiot, Watson! Curse me for seven kinds of a fool! I should have realized the situation as soon as I heard the name 'Charlotte Dodgson'. In what profession would a clumsy or ugly sounding name be a hindrance? Acting! Many actors change their names to something more mellifluous. And actors are often highly literate individuals who possess a love of word play. Surely Charlotte Dodgson would recognise the similarity of her name to that of Charles Dodgson, the real name of the man who wrote 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'. She could not resist the humour involved in changing her name to be similar to his pseudonym of 'Lewis Carroll'. It was Louise Carroll whom we should have been seeking all along."

Holmes proceeded to leaf through the current edition of the newspaper to ascertain in which show Louise Carroll might be playing that evening. Unfortunately, she did not appear to be engaged in any programme at the moment. Neither Holmes nor I had seen any of her performances, so we did not know what she looked like. But at least we now knew the appropriate name of the person we sought.

Tempus had been observing Louise Carroll for several days now. He had noticed that she possessed the same feisty spirit and casual attitude toward danger as her descendent. He knew just how to use those traits to precipitate her demise and therefore that of the Galactically Stupid One. "God, I love irony!" he thought.

He faked an obsequious air as he approached her. "Miss Carroll! I have attended every one of your programmes. Your singing is magnificent!"

Louise tried to walk past him as she said, "You are very kind, sir." Tempus, however, blocked her way.

"Permit me to introduce myself. I am Lieutenant John Tempess of Scotland Yard. I was hoping to convince you to enlist your thespian abilities to help make our city safer."

Louise stopped walking and turned toward Tempus. "I'm listening."

"You, of course, know how Jack has been terrorising the city by committing gruesome murders. We've been having the devil of a time trying to find him. I have come up with a plan which, with your help, should draw him out. We need someone to take on the role of a woman of questionable repute to walk around in the areas which Jack has frequented in order to lure him into the open. Jack may be suspecting us to do something like this, so we would require the woman to have considerable acting abilities in order to convince him that she was the sort of woman she appeared to be. I would be most grateful if you would take this role. I would, of course, be keeping a careful eye on you. The moment Jack revealed himself, before he would have a chance to injure you, I would arrest him. With your help, we could stop him from ever killing again. The entire city would be grateful to you. But I must warn you, there is always a slight chance of danger in even the best of undercover operations."

Louise needed almost no time to consider her response. "The danger does not concern me. I can supply a costume. Where and when should we meet?"

Tempus thought, "Yes! Wave a red flag in front of her and she charges in just as mindlessly as Lois. Especially when do-gooding is involved. And leave it to an actress to fall for fake flattery. I'm glad she didn't need much convincing. If I had to keep up this nicey-nice act much longer, I think I'd puke."

"The sooner we begin, the less chance Jack will have of killing again. Let us meet in George Yard at 9:00 this evening."

"I'll be there."

Tempus knew the rest would be child's play. He merely had to travel to the place and time of Jack's last known murder and to use his newly-acquired subliminator to "convince" him to be in George Yard at the trysting hour. Then when Louise walked down the street, Jack's impulses would take over and with Louise' death, Utopia would poof out of existence. And the villains would win. He loved a good evil ending!

From the notebooks of John H. Watson:

We decided that we would work in two teams – Kent and Wells would canvass the local theatres, and Holmes and I would go to the various taverns and public houses which employed entertainers. After many unsuccessful enquiries, Holmes and I discovered a tavern in which Miss Carroll had sung as recently as two months prior. With the help of a few quid, Holmes persuaded the establishment's owner to tell us the address of his former employee's lodgings. Miss Carroll's landlord proved to be quite talkative.

"You're looking for Miss Carroll, are you? She is going places, that young lady, you mark my words! I've heard her practicing her songs during the daytime. She sings like a nightingale, she does. And her beauty would draw all eyes towards her, don't matter none who else might be on stage at the time. She'll be performing at Covent Garden before the decade is out. You just see if she don't!"

Holmes could appear the personification of patience when it was necessary to elicit information. "You may well

be correct, sir. But I have come today to see her on a matter of the utmost urgency. Is she within, or might you know where she is?"

"She's not here now. She left... When was it? She was here but an hour ago when the missus and I was taking our tea. But she had gone by the time we had cleaned up the kitchen. I don't rightly know where she is. She said something about a special job and her civic duty to help make London safe. But her getup weren't half revealing. If I didn't know it was a costume for a role, I'd have thrown her out on the street then and there. We run a respectable lodging, and we wouldn't have 'that' kind of woman here!"

"You have been most helpful. Thank you." Holmes and I took our leave.

"I say, Holmes, that doesn't get us any closer to finding her than we were before. Should we just stay here to meet her when she returns?"

"If we stay here, Watson, she will be killed before she gets a chance to return; she is currently in the garb in which she is to die tonight. We must find her before Jack does. We haven't the time to verify any hypotheses, so we must work on the most likely speculations. According to her landlord, she had mentioned something about a special job and her civic duty. Perhaps she is trying to lure Jack into the open so that the constabulary can arrest him. Our next stop should be to see Inspector Lestrade."

The good inspector assured us that Scotland Yard would never endanger a member of the general public by requesting them to take on such a role. Having eliminated the possibility that Carroll had received her commission in that manner, Holmes concluded that it was likely that she had received it from a less legitimate source – most likely from Tempus himself.

"According to Wells, the identity of Jack was never discovered. Therefore, Tempus could not know who he is or where he might be this evening. And yet he would wish to make it probable that Jack encounter Miss Carroll. Were he to reason that Jack would likely revisit the sites of his previous crimes, he would request Miss Carroll to walk in those locales. We haven't time to ensure that all of the locations are covered; we must deduce which one is the most likely one for Tempus to choose."

With that, Holmes closed his eyes and became still for several minutes. The suddenness of his exclamation of, "George Yard, and not a moment to spare!" startled me. We were moving too swiftly for me to ask him how he had arrived at the conclusion that that was the proper location. Despite the paucity of facts with which to work, his reasoning proved sound. Just as we arrived at the street in question, we could hear the sounds of a struggle and a muffled scream. The sight that lay before us as we turned the corner and the subsequent events I shall remember until my dying day. Had I not seen them with my own eyes, I would never have believed such events possible.

A young lady who bore a striking resemblance to the one sketched by Mr Kent was struggling vainly to fend off an attacker. The man stood behind her and had one arm wrapped around her throat as he unsheathed a knife with his free hand. I started to reach for my revolver and I heard Holmes inhale deeply and start to shout an order for the attacker to desist. What then transpired transfixed us both. We heard a sound such as a chimney makes when under gale-force winds, and then we saw Mr Kent descend rapidly from the sky. Before we could even begin to steel ourselves to witness his inevitable demise, however, he landed in a controlled fashion. He stared intensely at the knife, which

the attacker dropped as though it were afire. His next movements were so rapid, that for the next second or two, he appeared as only a blur. When he had once again slowed down, I could see that he must have freed Miss Carroll from her attacker and secured Jack by means of wrapping a nearby lamp-post around his torso.

I am fully aware of how preposterous this narrative appears. It sounds more fantastical than anything Doyle or Wells has ever written. And yet I am recording the details as faithfully as is humanly possible, without elaboration or embellishments.

I looked to Holmes to see whether he was as dumbfounded as I. The only indication that his composure was strained was that his complexion had paled. I recalled his earlier words regarding Mr Kent's peculiarities. Had he been alluding to *this* even then? What could it mean? How was it possible for a man to fly, or to move too fast for the eye to see, or to bend a lamp-post with his bare hands? His actions were not humanly possible; that would have been evident to any witness. And all I have learned from my experiences in the war and in being a physician serve only to reinforce the impossibility of his actions. What could be the rational explanation for his feats? My questions would need to wait for another time.

Holmes addressed Mr Kent as he approached him. "I see you came to the same conclusions we did. Your arrival was most timely."

Mr Kent nodded, but his attention was centered on Louise. She appeared uninjured, but distraught. Mr Kent started to comfort her with reassuring words. Only then did she seem to take in the enormity of the situation.

"Sir, thank you for coming to my aid. Had you not come when you did, I would have died! I don't understand -- Lieutenant Tempess was supposed to have stopped Jack before the villain laid a hand on me. I don't know what happened."

Mr Wells jogged around the corner just then, having finally caught up to his fellow time traveller. "That, my dear, is easy to explain. Your 'Lieutenant Tempess' is not a member of the constabulary at all, but rather a villain who desired your demise at the hands of Jack."

This revelation further distressed Miss Carroll. Mr Kent hesitantly put his arm around her shoulders in a brotherly gesture obviously designed to give her comfort and support. Mr Wells then impressed upon us that it was imperative that we tell no one what we had just witnessed. Holmes assured him that we had become privy to numerous secrets of a sensitive nature over the course of our investigations, and that their secrets were safe with us. Mr Wells then turned to Louise, who likewise assured him that she would tell no one. "Who would believe me? I would have no one else to corroborate my story. I'd be institutionalised as a lunatic. I am not a fool. Rest assured that I shall never speak of the events of this evening."

No one was very concerned about what Jack might say of this evening's events. The entire city was already predisposed, by virtue of his heinous deeds and monstrous letters, to consider him insane. Were he to relate the actual events of the night, no one would give credence to his tale. The five of us agreed upon the story which Holmes, Miss Carroll, and myself would recount to the constabulary regarding the evening's events, should the necessity arise.

We still needed to resolve the matters of what to do with Jack and the twisted lamp-post. Mr Wells suddenly seemed struck by a thought. He pointed out that in the original timeline, Jack was never caught and in fact appeared to

disappear from London altogether. Mr Wells believed that to be sufficient grounds to permit him to take Jack into the future, where he could be rehabilitated and where Mr Kent's abilities were already known to all. Mr Kent, Holmes, and I agreed with his plan. I could not but stare in astonishment as Mr Kent then fully straightened the lamp-post with just his hands. Mr Wells firmly secured Jack with rope which the writer had brought with him. The time travellers thanked us for our assistance and took their leave, with Jack in tow. Neither Holmes nor I ever saw them again.

When we were back at our flat, I asked Holmes how it was that he had deduced George Yard to be the appropriate site. He responded that he knew he had neither enough information to come to a fully informed conclusion nor enough time to gather more facts. Therefore, he needed to deduce the most likely site based on what scarce information he did have. The most likely location occurred to him when he pondered what Mr Kent had relayed to us of his own family and of Tempus' manner of thinking. He reasoned that Tempus would savour the irony of having Mrs Kent's ancestor killed in the same location as a victim who shared a name with Mr Kent's mother; Martha Tabram had been the name of the victim killed in George Yard.

I then went on to ask Holmes how he had known of Mr Kent's extraordinary abilities. His response was notable for his rare admission of ignorance.

"I must confess, my dear Watson, that I had not been aware of the full scope of what Mr Kent could do. But I had become cognisant of his unusual nature during our first meeting with him. Do you recall him doing anything out of the ordinary while drinking his tea?" "At one point he stared intensely at his cup for a second or two."

"Well done. Did you notice anything else?"

"No. That was all."

"Then you missed the twin facts that he lowered his spectacles before staring at the cup and that his tea began to steam while he was looking at it. I could see nothing unusual about his eyes which might indicate that he had had some sort of surgery to insert a heating device in or near them. Surely even in the future surgery would result in scarring. His ability to heat the tea with his eyes alone would therefore appear to be an ability native to him rather than the result of a medical procedure. Once I discarded the notion that he was an ordinary human, his lack of calluses took on an additional significance. I deduced from them that either his strength far surpassed that of all other men such that calluses never formed despite his manual labour or else his body had a vastly superior ability to heal. It became obvious to me that Mr Kent was indeed different from any other individual the world has seen." Although that was the last time Holmes and I ever spoke of the time travellers, their brief sojourn here made me aware that, as Shakespeare so aptly put it, there are stranger things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in my philosophy. I have since started to read speculative fiction and have found to my great surprise that I now enjoy the genre, and especially the works of H. G. Wells.

It seemed to Clark as though the city of London were dissolving around him. Then he was back on his sofa giving his wife a not-very-brotherly hug. He leaned back to drink in the sight of the woman he loved more than life itself, and whom he had thought he might never see again. He shook his head. What made him think such a thought, especially when he was right in the middle of enjoying a rare night at home with Lois? For some reason, an image of Mr. Wells

came to him, along with one of Lois dressed as a prostitute; but he couldn't recall why. Strange.

He saw that his own befuddlement was mirrored by a similar look of confusion on Lois' face. He decided to ask her about it.

"Honey, what's wrong?"

"I don't know. I just had the strangest feeling; kind of like the pins and needles of a foot waking up after being asleep, only over my whole body. But the sensation only lasted a second, and then it just disappeared. Do you think it means anything?"

Clark replied, "I don't know. I guess time will tell." He then went back to conducting his own very personal research on his favorite subject.

THE END