

# HOPE

A Gift, Part One

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Original Sherlock Holmes Stories By:

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

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# HOPE

## A Gift, Part One

### A Short Story

2405, New London.

Times have changed since the nuclear war of the New World.

Cities that were once lost to man are being rebuilt, rehabilitated. What had been nothing more than piles of rubble are being restored to their full potential, regardless of the effort and time it takes to do so.

Tall, artfully designed buildings of glass and stone fill the heart of London.

Although most homes and buildings look like little more than brick cottages, they are at the height of recent technology.

Doors are sealed by prints and codes while hovercrafts speed through the flowerbed lined streets.

It's beautiful, what's become of the war's chaos.

Hopeful, one might even think.

But for the weak of justice, this day and age has become an unlawful playground.

The art of secure banking has never been recovered.

Those in such a field have tried and tried, but no matter the technical advancements in security, there's always someone there to top it.

"Well, shit." Detective Gregson hisses with a rub at his stubble dusted jaw.

The beard on this man is as patchy as the hair

upon his toupee covered head.

The detective is a wide figured man. His hard, dark gaze and gruff demeanor do little to shake the stereotypes of Scotland Yard.

Tough, mean, and almost always outmatched.

It's unfortunate, but it's the way things have become since the rise of the fallen city.

Detective Gregson bites his lip and takes a step back to get a better look at the damage.

The vault to the Harrison bank has been wiped clean of all valuables. There's not a shell of a unit left.

Detective Rylie jots down a note from beside the detached vault lock just outside of it's heavy, circular door. The older man's brows are raised sky high when he reaches up to brush one with his thumb.

"Heh." He huffs in flabbergasted amusement. "No idea how they broke into this one, but... They didn't tamper with the vault's system."

"Impossible." Gregson scoffs. He scuffs his old shoe against the solid cement beneath him and turns. No vents, no sewer, no emergency escape...

The only way in is through the vault entrance.

Men and women of Scotland Yard's forensic team are taking photos and looking for any means of entry, but they'll no doubt come up empty handed.

And the video footage?

Completely erased.

Like a ghost.

Rylie waddles a heavy step toward the vault entrance and grins. "Scrooge strikes again." He chimes.

Gregson growls at the ridiculous name for their untraceable thieves. "I hate Old World story books."

“Ah.” Rylie breathes. “You hate classics, you mean.”

“Yes.” Gregson gestures around them. “Because in my experience, they bring nothing but trouble for the modern age.”

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A slide of a zipper, pull of a lace, tug of a hat...

Black jacket, blue jeans, black boots, and a gray hat cover the petite frame of a raven haired child.

The young girl's skin is porcelain in shade and thin as paper.

The dark under part of her eyes only enhance the clear blue gateways to this young woman's soul.

Emotionless, cold, hyper focused...

These aren't the kind of eyes one wishes to have focused on them.

When this girl exhales, it fills the inside of her dark blue tent with white air.

Carefully, she slides on two ratty gloves, one for each hand.

There's little more than a few sets of clothes, some food rations, and neatly folded blankets within this girl's home. No personal artifacts, no notes, no drawings, no pictures, nothing aside from the necessities.

The girl reaches for the screen embedded in her tent's entrance and plugs in a quick combination of numbers that ends in the fold of her tent falling open.

At the drop, she can then hear her surroundings.

Some man is arguing with a shelter volunteer about the food rations while another lights a homemade cigar.

It lets off a stale, musky scent, just as it does every morning.

The girl climbs out of her tent to enter the overpopulated Old World subway station turned homeless shelter.

The space is crowded with tents, people and rubble, but it's safer than some of London's alternative shelters.

People bicker like they're in the downtown market, but this girl doesn't indulge in the endless conflict. Instead, she keeps her head down and makes a beeline for the shelter's bright exit.

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Deep breath.

The air isn't as sweet beside the river. In fact, it's rather pungent.

Short, dark strands of hair frame the flushed cheeks of this unusually groomed misfit.

The color makes her look real, less like a statue.

She sits with her feet over the railed off edge of the Thames. A bar presses into her chest, keeping her steady.

This barren road has yet to be made anything. It's been torn down and cleaned up, but there have yet to be plans made for it's future.

So instead it sits empty aside from a few plants that manage to grow here and there.

A slice of potential, opportunity, within this growing city.

Perhaps it's the symbolism that keeps this girl coming back.

"Hey, Einstein!" A young man calls whilst

cupping his hands around his mouth like a megaphone.

The girl looks back to find three boys steadily approaching. They're older than her by at least three years.

Casually, she swings her legs out from within the contraption of metal she's tangled within and steps back to watch as the boys conquer the distance between them.

"Homeless Einstein." Another, heavier boy points out.

"Wouldn't have to be." The third smirks. "Not with all the money we're pocketing."

These kids don't have the same calm exterior as the girl they're addressing. Nor do they share the same ratty garments.

"Pocketed." The girl mutters. "I never work with the same group twice." She steps left to take her leave, but is caught on the arm by the heaviest of the three boys.

"Hold it, Einstein." He snuffs. "You haven't even collected your share yet."

The Einstein of the four darts a look to the hand around her scrawny arm. It's digging through her jacket and into her flesh.

She analyzes the dirty hand and not for the first time makes note of the tell tale signs of contamination on the boys' clothing.

Off colored dust, soil, oil...

They've been outside the city. In fact, that's where they've just been and where they'll shortly return.

The preparations are sloppy and let tell their intentions.

Einstein can only plead for a proper execution of

this pathetic little strategy.

“We've got it in our safe house. It's all ready to go for you.” He lies.

It's embarrassing.

She's embarrassed for them.

Einstein yanks her arm out of the boy's hold, then jabs him, and the other two, in the eyes with the fingers of her right hand.

All three scream and collapse on the ground.

Not seen, not heard, not expected...

A proper crime.

Even if it were self defense.

“I won't be needing my share.” She says with a casual turn of her back. “I'm in it for the sport, not the units.”

One foot in front of the other, she walks away.

No name, no address, no number...

This is the ghost of London.

The single greatest criminal to hit the streets since the alliance of the After World.

---

Einstein, as she's been temporarily named, walks casually through the rubble left from humanity's last war.

Well, what should have been it's last war.

Now the world wants to break apart, make the same mistakes...

One can't teach old dogs new tricks, they used to say.

Snowflakes drift from the clouds above. They fall lazily to the ruins below where buildings once stood tall in this crippled city.



They dust these bricks and scrap metal with a light coat of frozen water crystals.

Einstein's breath fogs before her reddened cheeks and chapped lips.

Not that she minds.

Not really.

She's never known anything better than the cold isolation she was seemingly born into.

One foot in front of the other she takes on the uneven terrain until she reaches the busted underpass of the subway station.

It's been blown from the outside in, by the looks of the debris. After the air was deemed "safe" survivors went looking for the other refugees.

It would be foolish to think they've all been found.

One can only hope the other colonists have reached their own discoveries of the After World.

The door shrieks when Einstein pulls it a few inches from the entryway.

She then shuffles inside the dark space and closes the busted mechanism back up again.

With a clink, the snow stops it's drifting. But even so, the staircase leading down is muddied with dirty snow and slush.

Einstein is careful to descend this poorly illuminated staircase.

The way the lights are strung overhead makes this place look an awful lot like a historic discovery.

All she needs is a lantern and someone could snap a photograph.

Einstein wanders the subway tunnels for all of a

mile before reaching the built-in shelter for the homeless.

As always people are arguing, chatting, drinking and smoking. It fills Einstein with nausea.

She doesn't speak a single word as she works her way back to her tent.

But that doesn't stop others from talking to her.

"Little one!" A woman with bright red hair curled down to her shoulders and perfectly sewn garments shouts in the girl's direction. She's waving a tablet in the air like a maniac. The light from the device is far brighter than those overhead. It forces a wince on Einstein's part.

"Yes." The woman breathes through a nod. She stops just before the girl and grins.

People are walking all around her. They pass out food and blankets like currency, but they're not animals.

Despite this woman and now Einstein blocking their path, they give the two space and walk around as though it weren't a major inconvenience for them.

"You'd be perfect, wouldn't you?" The social worker says. She turns the tablet around to show Einstein the screen. "Well? What do you think?"

Einstein looks down at the device without expression. She doesn't give off a single tell as she reads through the university's article.

It's a project.

Students of the astute AWAL University are looking for homeless families and individuals to share a Christmas dinner with.

Giving back...

In exchange for bountiful amounts of extra

credit.

She wants to scoff, to spit in the faces of the greedy, attention seeking bastards who came up with this idea, but something catches her eye.

A name.

Followed shortly by a picture.

Holmes.

One of the students is a boy of the Holmes family estate. Said estate is rumored to house the only XI-Ren vault in the After World.

What she wouldn't give to break the unbreakable...

Einstein reaches out and taps at the picture of the Holmes family estate. From what can be seen behind the student in the picture, the estate is tough to penetrate.

Statues are placed around the home's garden in ways that can only be meant to keep an eye on every inch of the property.

With their size and spacing? They have to be connected to a sonar security system, it would be a waste if they weren't.

After all, private security is exactly how the Holmes family made their fortune.

To have their own security hacked?

It would ruin them.

The social worker pulls the tablet back to take a look at the picture Einstein's been staring at. "Oh!" She gasps. "Mycroft Holmes is a profound gentleman. I had the opportunity to interview him just last morning. Very appealing candidate, you must agree."

Einstein stares blankly up at the woman, for her mind has long since drifted to codes and high voltage.

The redhead beams at the girl's blank expression. "You know," she leans in as if to share a secret, "Mycroft Holmes is the name of Sherlock Holmes' older brother." She raises her brows through a nod and leans back. "From the Sherlock Holmes stories? You ever read any of those?"

She doesn't get a response.

"Hmm." The woman humms. "Suppose I'll have to add them to the list."

---

Hacking into the university's database is easy for a ghost like Einstein- or, well, Sherlock, is the name she's given to her make believe profile.

Falsified birth certificate, a few adoption attempts that fell through, a free lesson or two from the lecturers in the area...

It's child's play.

As well as fool proof.

No one will be able to tell it was crafted out of date. No one.

The name is an unfortunate choice, Sherlock must admit. But at least there will be no question as to why she's assigned the Holmes family. After all, anyone with good humor and an appreciation of classics would make the connection.

Sherlock pries her frigid fingertips from the cracked screen of an old tablet. It's heavier than the new editions and not nearly as efficient. It slows to painful speeds and can't withstand excessive amounts of water without breaking.

But it's all she has for now.

Waves thrash against the sides of the barrier.

They're loud, distracting.

Fortunately for Sherlock she's finished constructing her new identity.

It's dangerous, crawling onto the grid like this, but she knows she can take it down just as easily as she put it up.

After tonight she will return to her existence as a ghost.

After tonight...

The Ghost of London will have become a legend.

She will be the single greatest hacker in history.

Stiffly, Sherlock stuffs her old tablet into a tin bedded sac and turns to face the railing that blocks her from the Thames.

She then pulls out a few segments of stone and sets them off to the side.

With steady, nearly frostbit fingers, Sherlock sets the tablet carrying sac into the hollow of the barrier and replaces the stone.

Aside from a few moronic ex-colleagues, this location beside the Thames is a well kept secret. And even those who have spotted her here haven't the slightest idea as to what significance such a location holds for her.

To them, it's a meet up.

To her, it's a base of operations.

Even if it is easily replaced.

Sherlock stands to her full, petite height and looks out at the city across the water.

Her facade is stiff and impenetrable, but inside she's only human.

The XI-Ren has been a legend of itself until this point. It's so tough, so immaculate that it survived the Great war and the troublesome years that followed like it were nothing despite the demolished artifacts that had once shared the same showroom.

She's gone over it in her head a million times, but still... it's impossible to accomplish little more than a theory without seeing the beast.

But she's confident in her technique.

Especially if she can bypass the estate's sonar security system.

---

Snow blankets the windowsills, lampposts, statues, pavement, and gardens of the Holmes family estate.

The staircases of stone leading up to the estate, however, are cleared due to the internal heating system built within them.

A waste of money? Perhaps.

But one can never be too careful when their son is an invalid, Sherlock supposes.

She watches dully as the wealthy scholar limps his way down the staircase.

At his back the home is lit with bright yellow lights while at Sherlock's back there is little more than snow dusted landscaping.

It's a secluded space out of the way for any law enforcement officers, but Sherlock has no doubt there are trained guards already living within this oversized estate.

It's an odd feeling that engulfs the girl when she looks up at the wide building.

The home is practically bursting with warmth and an odd sense of belonging.

Mycroft Holmes leans heavily on his cane. He hasn't quite reached the bottom of the staircase yet, but he seems quite content where he is.

The young man's cheeks are flushed and lips lightly chapped from heaving in and out breaths.

Sherlock steps up to make the difference, then hands Mycroft the sheet supposedly given to her by the University's office.

The boy snatches the paper without word and looks it over. His eyes skim the paper with ease, then dart back up to the first line.

"William Sherlock Holmes Scott." He reads aloud. He's sharply pronouncing each of the words in either an attempt to sound superior or express his amusement.

Sherlock can't tell which.

"Says here you're uneducated." He breathes through a tired, disappointed sigh.

He's not expecting a response, so it's to no surprise when Sherlock stares blankly back at him.

The young man's stance shifts. His body lifts itself to a more appropriate height as though he were trying to hide his disability.

It's sudden, but he's standing tall, taking her seriously...

Seeing her as an equal, or rather, someone he doesn't want to look weak in front of.

She's no longer a sewer rat. She's a human being.

A breeze reminds Mycroft of his poorly chosen garments, but there's still more to be said before he can

invite this young woman into the comfort of his own home.

“My name is Mycroft.” He introduces through a charming smile. “But you already know that. In fact, you know everything about me.”

Sherlock startles a nervous step back.

It's evident in the boy's eyes and change of posture that he can see straight through her.

He knows who she is, why she's here.

Sherlock tries a glance back, but the snow covered path is long and barren. There are no police crafts approaching, nor is there a chance she could escape if chased.

Compromised.

Her seamless documents and years of research have all been lost by one measly look from this young man.

Ice blue eyes stare into a dark, knowing gaze.

He has no proof, she falls back on.

She doesn't know when or how he figured her out, but there's no way it was from her documents.

They're perfect.

Her new life records?

Authentic to any trained eye.

Mycroft snorts.

Snorts.

Sherlock's brows twist in aggravation.

It's like he's inside her head, reading her thoughts.

“You're not very good at first impressions, are you, Sherlock?”

Again, Sherlock tries a look over her shoulder.



Even if she did run, where would she go?

It was a long walk here, and if she's honest? She's not entirely sure she could make it back.

“Sherlock.” She finally introduces. “Pleased to meet your acquaintance.”

Mycroft nods at an unspoken decision and folds the document in his left hand. “What do you know...” he breathes, “there may just be hope for you, after all.”

TO BE CONTINUED

## FROM THE AUTHOR

Hello,

Happy holidays and thank you for your support!

Want to read the Hope series? Please look for “Hope: A Study In Scarlet” or “Hope: The Complete First Set” to start!

If you're looking to continue on with Amser Studios, please look for updates on my twitter @amserstudios, or subscribe to my website's monthly newsletter at: [www.amserstudios.com](http://www.amserstudios.com)!

Thank you again, and have a lovely rest of your day!

-Legend W. Brook