

He appeared to derive a great deal of amusement from his little joke, and whistled happily looking at it.

“Now that I’ve set the record straight for future historians, I’ve got to go!” he said. “Hurry up, Mister Holmes, because in three minutes, I’ll have flown the coop and your humiliation will be complete... Another two minutes! I’m waiting, Mister Holmes... Only one minute to go! You’re not here? You disappoint me! Very well, I unilaterally proclaim my victory and your defeat! And now I take my leave. Farewell, my Kingdom! I shall look upon you no more. Farewell, my 55 rooms in the five apartments over which I reigned! Farewell, my austere and humble abode!”

The sound of a bell cut short his mocking and lyrical speech. A short, shrill, strident bell, twice interrupted, twice resumed. It was the alarm bell.

What could it mean? Some unexpected danger? Ganimard? Surely not...

He was about to return to his study and flee, but first, he decided to check out the street. He looked out of the window. There was no one suspicious down there. Had the enemy already invaded the house? He listened intently and thought he heard a jumble of confused sounds. Now, without any hesitation, he ran back to the study. As he walked into the room, he heard the characteristic sounds of someone trying to open the door with a skeleton key.

“Curses!” he swore. “I’m running out of time. The house must be surrounded... But they can’t have found out about the service stairs yet... Thanks to the passage behind that fireplace, I’ll...”

He pushed the molding; it refused to move. He pushed with all his strength, to no greater result.

At the same moment, he thought he heard the front door open. A thunder of steps followed.

“Damn it!” he swore again. “I’m lost unless that confounded spring...”

His fingers clutched the molding. He bore upon it with all his weight. Obstinate, it still refused to move! By some incredible bad luck—if that was what it was?—a malicious accident of fate, the spring which was working only moments ago now refused to open his only path to freedom.

He persisted, fought with, swore at the inert piece of marble which still refused to move. He was livid with rage. Could such a stupid obstacle stand in his way? He struck the marble with his fists, hammered it with furious blows, called it names...

“Why, Monsieur Lupin, is something not going according to your plan?”

Lupin turned around, terror-stricken. Sherlock Holmes stood before him!

Sherlock Holmes! Lupin looked at him, his eyes blinking as if trying to dispel some nightmarish vision. Sherlock Holmes whom he had, only the day before, packed off to England as one might get rid of a troublesome parcel. Sherlock Holmes who, now, stood before him, triumphant and free. For that impossible, miraculous event to occur despite Arsène Lupin’s will, there must have been some inexplicable upset in the very laws of nature. It was the victory of all that is illogical and irrational. It just could not be. And yet, Sherlock Holmes stood before him!

The Detective displayed the same polite irony that his foe had so often used against him.

“Monsieur Lupin,” he said, “from this minute onward, I shall never again give another thought to the awful night you forced me to spend in Baron d’Hautrec’s house, to my friend Dr. Watson’s injuries, to my kidnapping and to my humiliating sea voyage, tied down to an uncomfortable berth at your orders. This moment wipes all that out. I have forgotten all my earlier setbacks. I am rewarded, very richly rewarded.”

Lupin remained silent.

“Wouldn’t you agree?” asked the Englishman.

He insisted, as if demanding an acknowledgement of defeat from his foe, a sort of receipt with regards to the past.

After a moment’s reflection, during which the Detective felt himself scrutinized to the very depths of his soul, Lupin spoke:

“I presume, Mister Holmes, that your question is supported by some very serious motive?”

“Extremely serious, Monsieur Lupin.”

“The fact that you managed to escape from Captain Jeannot and his men is nothing but a minor skirmish in our struggle. But the fact that you dare appear before me here, *alone* against Arsène Lupin, leads me to believe that your victory must be as complete as can be.”

“Indeed. As complete as possible.”

“This house?”

“Surrounded.”

“The two neighboring houses?”

“Surrounded.”

“The apartment above this one?”

“The *three* apartments on the fifth floor occupied by Monsieur Dubreuil are also surrounded.”

“So that...?”

“So that you are caught, Monsieur Lupin. Irredeemably caught.”

Lupin now experienced the same feelings that Holmes had felt during his kidnapping: the same fury, the same hopeless revolt, but also, it must be said, the same sense of fair play which compelled him to bow down before adversity. Both men were equally strong-willed; both were equally capable of accepting defeat as an occasional evil which must be faced with equanimity.

“You’re right, Mister Holmes,” said Lupin without reservation. “We are indeed quits.”

Holmes seemed delighted by Lupin’s admission. They both remained silent for a while. Then, the Gentleman Burglar appeared to regain his usual self-control and natural sense of humor.

“I’m not sorry, either,” he said with forced bravado. “It was becoming boring to win every time. I only had to put out my arm to hit you in the chest every time. But now, it’s your turn. *Touché*, Mister Holmes!” He now laughed with genuine good humor. “Now we shall have some fun. Lupin is caught and well trapped. How will he escape? Can he escape? What an adventure! I have to thank you for giving me such emotions, Mister Holmes! That’s what I call living life to the fullest!”

He pressed his fists to his temples, as if to contain the jumble of emotions that swelled up inside him. His behavior reminded Holmes of a child stressed beyond his endurance.

“What do you want?” he suddenly and abruptly asked the Detective.

“What do you mean?”

“Ganimard is here with his men. Why doesn’t he come in?”

“I asked him not to.”

“And he agreed?”

“I promised to deliver you to him only on the express condition that he would explicitly follow all my instructions. Besides, he doesn’t know who you are. He thinks Felix Davey is merely one of Lupin’s men.”

“So I’m asking you again, what do you want? Or if you prefer, why did you come here alone?”

“I wanted to talk to you first.”

“Ah-ha! You wanted to talk to me...”

That fact pleased Lupin greatly. There are situations in life where words are much preferable to deeds, and this was one such situation.

“I’m sorry not to have a chair to offer you, Mister Holmes,” he said graciously. “Would this half-broken crate do? Or maybe that window ledge? I wish I had a glass of beer to offer you, too... Pish!”

“Never mind all that. Let’s talk.”

“I’m listening.”

“I shall be brief. As you know, the purpose of my visit to France wasn’t your arrest. If I was forced to go after you, it was because I couldn’t see any other means to accomplish my first objective...”

“Which was?”

“To recover the Blue Diamond.”

“I see.”

“Since the one found in Herr Bleichen’s tube of soap powder was but a fake...”

“Indeed. The real gem was mailed by the Blonde Phantom. I had an exact copy made. As I had designs upon the Comtesse de Crozon’s other jewels, and the Austrian Consul was already a suspect, it seemed a good idea to hide the fake diamond in his luggage in order to divert attention from the so-called Madame de Real.”

“While you kept the real one.”

“Of course.”

“I want that diamond.”

“Impossible, I’m sorry.”

“I promised the Comtesse de Crozon I’d recover it and, therefore, I mean to have it.”

“How do you plan to achieve that since it’s in my possession?”

“I shall have it *precisely* because it’s in your possession.”

“Do you mean that you expect me to surrender it to you?”

“Yes.”

“Willingly?”

"I'll buy it from you, if you want."

Lupin laughed.

"How British! You make it sound like a business transaction!"

"It is."

"And what would you offer me in exchange?"

"Mademoiselle Destange's freedom."

"Her freedom? I wasn't aware she'd been arrested."

"I'll give Chief Inspector Ganimard the necessary information. Deprived of your protection, she'll be arrested."

Lupin laughed again.

"I'm afraid you're offering me something you do not possess, Mister Holmes. Mademoiselle Destange is safe and has nothing to fear. I want something else."

The Englishman hesitated, obviously embarrassed. Then, he put his hand on Lupin's shoulder.

"What if I offered you..."

"My freedom?"

"Not quite, but I could... leave the room, talk with Monsieur Ganimard..."

"And leave me alone, say, to think things over?"

"Exactly."

"That would be an attractive offer if this damn mechanism was still working," said Lupin, pushing the molding with irritation.

Suddenly, they both stifled an exclamation of surprise. This time, fate had intervened and the hidden passage had sprung open! Escape was now possible. Why deal with Holmes under such circumstances?

Lupin paced back and forth as if he was considering his answer. Then, he in turn put his hand on the Englishman's shoulder.

"All things considered, Mister Holmes, I'd rather carry on my business without your assistance."

"Still..."

"Thank you, but I don't need anybody's help."

"When Ganimard has you, it'll all be over. They won't ever let you go."

"Who knows?"

"Come, now! This is madness. Every exit is being watched."

"Not quite. There's one which isn't."

"Which one?"

"*The one I plan to take.*"

"Words! Your arrest is just a question of minutes!"

"It isn't."

"Then...?"

"Then I'll keep the Blue Diamond."

Holmes took out his watch.

"Do reconsider. It's now ten minutes to three. At three o'clock sharp, I'll call Ganimard."

"Then, that gives us ten minutes to chat. Let's make the most of our time together, Mister Holmes. And first, to satisfy my curiosity, could you tell me how you procured my address and the name Felix Davey?"

Holmes kept a close eye on Lupin, whose good spirits always made him uneasy. But answering the Gentleman Burglar's question appealed to his professional vanity.

"I had your address from your lady friend."

"Clotilde?"

"Yes. Remember, yesterday morning, when I tried to force her to come with me, she pretended to call her dressmaker..."

"So she did."

"I understood later that there was no dressmaker and that she had called you instead. Last night, in the boat, I remembered the last two digits of the number she had dialed: 73. Since I had the list of the houses you had rigged, it was child's play for me, upon my return to Paris this morning at 11 a.m., to look through the telephone directory for the house matching a telephone number ending with 73. That's how I discovered the name of Monsieur Felix Davey. Once I knew your name and address, then I called on Monsieur Ganimard."

“Brilliant! Absolutely first-rate! Congratulations, Mister Holmes. But how did you manage to take that train in Le Havre? How did you manage to escape from the *Hirondelle*?”

“I didn’t.”

“I don’t understand.”

“You gave strict orders to Captain Jeannot to not reach Southampton until 1 a.m. In fact, they landed at midnight, just in time for me to grab the last ferry to Le Havre.”

“Jeannot betrayed me? Impossible!”

“He did not betray you.”

“What then...?”

“It was his watch.”

“His watch?”

“Yes, I put his watch forward an hour.”

“How?”

“The only way possible: by turning its stem. We were sitting together chatting and I told him about some of my most famous cases and he was so caught up that he didn’t notice a thing.”

“Bravo! Well done! It’s a clever trick and I’ll remember it. But what about the cabin clock?”

“That one was more difficult because my legs were tied. But the sailor who was watching me when the Captain went on deck kindly agreed to give the hands a push.”

“One of my men? He agreed to help you...?”

“Oh, he didn’t realize the consequences of what he was doing. I told him I had to catch the last train to London and... he allowed himself to be persuaded.”

“In consideration of...?”

“Of a small gift... which the decent fellow, I’m sure, intends to faithfully send to you.”

“What gift?”

“A mere trifle.”

“Yes, but what?”

“The Blue Diamond.”

“The Blue Diamond?”

“Yes, the fake one, which the Comtesse de Crozon entrusted to me...”

Lupin suddenly burst out laughing, so spontaneously and so full of gaiety that his eyes teared up.

“What a remarkable joke! My fake Blue Diamond handed back to my own man! And the Captain’s watch! The hands of the clock!...”

Never before had Sherlock Holmes felt that the battle between Arsène Lupin and himself had grown so intense as at this very moment. With his prodigious intuition, he guessed that Lupin’s hilarity was but a mask. Under it, the Gentleman Burglar was marshalling his own, formidable powers, readying every fiber of his being, preparing to strike.

Lupin had stealthily drawn closer to the Detective. The Englishman stepped back and put his hand in his pocket.

“It’s 3 p.m., Monsieur Lupin,” said Holmes.

“Already? What a pity! We were having such good fun.”

“I’m still waiting for your answer.”

“My answer? Goodness me! So our game’s over, with my freedom as the stakes?”

“Or the Blue Diamond.”

“The answer’s no. Your move. Show me your cards, Mister Holmes.”

“I play the king,” said Holmes, firing a shot with his revolver, which he had kept hidden in his pocket.

“And here’s *my hand!*” exclaimed Lupin, hurling his fist at his rival.

Holmes had fired in the air to summon Ganimard, whose intervention he had now deemed necessary. But Lupin’s fist caught him full in the stomach and he turned pale and staggered back. Lupin leaped towards the secret passage. But he was too late! The door was smashed open.

“Surrender, Lupin, or else...”

Ganimard, who had doubtless been waiting nearer than Lupin thought, stood in the doorway, his revolver aimed squarely at the Gentleman Burglar. He was not alone. Ten, 20 men stood behind him, guns drawn, the type of men who would have shot him like a dog, without a second thought, at the least sign of resistance.

Lupin made a quiet gesture.

“Put your guns down. I surrender.”

And he crossed his arms over his chest.

A moment of stupor followed. In the room, empty of its furniture and curtains, Lupin's words echoed ringingly.

"I surrender!"

Those words sounded incredible. Everyone expected him to vanish in a puff of smoke, or down a trapdoor, or through a sliding wall, escaping once again at the last minute from the desperate grasp of his would-be captors. But no! Instead, he surrendered, meekly, like any ordinary criminal caught red-handed!

Ganimard stepped forward. Greatly moved, with all the gravity that the circumstance demanded, he slowly brought his hand down upon his old enemy's shoulder and uttered the ritual words with infinite pleasure:

"Arsène Lupin, I'm arresting you in the name of the Law."

"Brrr!" mock-shivered Lupin. "You're trying to impress me, Ganimard. Why such a somber face? You look like you're delivering a eulogy at a friend's gravesite. Drop those funereal airs!"

"I'm arresting you."

"Yes, I heard you the first time! In the name of the Law, whose faithful servant you are. Chief Inspector Ganimard is arresting the wicked Arsène Lupin. I suppose this is a historical event. I wonder if your men grasp its full importance... And this is the second time you've done it, too! Congratulations, Ganimard, you should do well in your career!"

The Gentleman Burglar held out his wrists for the handcuffs.

They were fastened almost solemnly. The policemen, despite their usual roughness and their pent-up resentment towards Lupin, were acting with a certain amount of reserve, amazed at being able to actually touch this semi-magical being.

"Alas, poor Lupin!" he sighed. "What would your friends from the Faubourgs say if they saw you humbled like this?"

He then pulled his wrists apart in a progressive effort, mustering all of his strength. The veins of his forehead swelled. The chain dug into his flesh.

"Now!" he said.

The chain snapped and broke in two.

"Another one, my good man," he jeered. "This one's no good."

This time, they put two pairs on him.

"That's better," he approved. "You can't be too careful."

Then, he counted the detectives.

"How many of you are there? Twenty-five? Thirty? That's a lot. I can't do anything against 30. Ah, if there'd only been 15 of you!"

He had all the mannerisms of a leading actor playing the role of his life, with verve, impertinence and an overabundance of charm. Holmes watched him as only a fellow thespian could, appreciating the beauty and each nuance of Lupin's play. And for a minute, he indeed believed that the struggle might have been equal had Lupin faced only 15 men instead of 30! The Police, backed by all the formidable power of the Law, and the Gentleman Burglar, alone, unarmed and in chains—the two were equally matched.

"Well, Mister Holmes, are you satisfied with your handiwork?" said Lupin. "Thanks to you, I shall rot away on the ever-damp straw of the cells of La Santé jail. It must bother your conscience a little, no? And surely you feel some pangs of remorse?"

The Englishman shrugged, as if to say: "I gave you a chance." Lupin understood the unspoken reply.

"Never!" he exclaimed. "I'll never give you the Blue Diamond! It cost me too much to acquire it. I value it too much to surrender it lightly. When I see you again next month, I'll tell you why... Shall we meet in London? No? Would you prefer Vienna? Saint-Petersburg?"

Suddenly, he gave a start. A bell had just rung. It was not the alarm-bell, but the sound of the telephone, which had not been disconnected and which sat on the floor between the two windows.

The telephone! Who would fall into a trap laid out by cruel fate? Lupin made a furious move towards the device as if he hoped to smash it and, by so doing, stop the mysterious voice which sought to speak to him. Ganimard was faster. He took the receiver from its hook and bent down.

"Hello? Hello? 648-73? Yes, that's right..."

But Holmes was even faster. With a brisk gesture, he pushed the Chief Inspector aside and grabbed the receiver. He put his handkerchief over the mouthpiece to muffle the sound of his voice.

At that moment, he exchanged a meaningful glance with Lupin. The same thought had struck both men simultaneously. In a flash, the two understood the last-minute consequences of the hypothesis that had formed in both their minds: it was the Blonde Phantom who was calling. Clotilde thought she was talking to Felix Davey, or Maxime Bermond; instead, she was about to confide in Sherlock Holmes!

"Hello, Clotilde?" said the Englishman.

A pause.

"Yes, it's Maxime," said Holmes.

At once, the drama took shape with tragic, almost-mathematical precision. Lupin, the mocking Lupin, the indomitable Lupin, no longer sought to hide his anxiety. His face pale with fear, he strove to hear, to guess the exact nature of Holmes' conversation with Clotilde.

"Yes, it's all finished. I'm done here and I was just about to come to meet you as we arranged... Where? Why, where you are... Isn't that best?"

Holmes hesitated, seeking his words, then stopped. It was obvious that he was trying to make Clotilde reveal where she was without admitting that he, himself, had no idea where that was, which would have given the game away. Ganimard's presence hindered him, too... Lupin was praying for some miracle to suddenly cut off the diabolical cat-and-mouse conversation that was almost too much for his nerves.

"Hello? I can't hear you," Holmes continued. "Yes, it's a bad connection. I almost lost you. Can you hear me now? Good. On second thought, I think you'd better go home... No, there's no danger, none at all... Holmes? He's still in England. I just had a cable from Southampton..."

The irony of those words. Holmes uttered them with a supreme sense of satisfaction.

"Go at once, my darling," he added. "I shall be with you soon."

He hung up the receiver.

"Chief Inspector," he said, "I would like to borrow three of your men."

"To arrest the Blonde Phantom, I presume?"

"Indeed."

"You know who she is? Where she is?"

"I do."

"By Jove! A fine capture! Lupin and the Blonde Phantom, on the same day! Folenfant, take two men and go with Mister Holmes!"

The Detective walked away, followed by the three policemen.

The battle was truly over. The Blonde Phantom, too, would soon be arrested by Sherlock Holmes. Thanks to his prodigious faculties, his incredible perseverance and a few lucky occurrences, the Detective triumphed while Lupin's fate was an irreparable disaster.

"Mister Holmes!"

The Englishman stopped.

"Yes, Monsieur Lupin?"

The Gentleman Burglar seemed deeply affected by this final blow. His face was wrinkled, tired-looking and somber. Still, he managed to draw himself up and recover some of his earlier energy, addressing his rival in a voice of feigned indifference.

"You must admit that fate is dead against me. Earlier, it prevented me from escaping through my secret passage and delivered me straight into your hands. Now, through this idiotic telephone, it delivers my lady into your hands as well. I surrender to its whims."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning that I'm willing to reopen negotiations if you are."

Holmes took Ganimard aside and asked his permission, in a tone that clearly entertained no refusal, to exchange a few private words with Lupin.

Then, the Detective walked up to his rival and looked him squarely in the eyes.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Mademoiselle Destange's freedom," replied Lupin.

"You know my price."

"Yes."

"You agree to pay it?"

"I agree to all your conditions."

"But just now," exclaimed the Englishman, "you refused... for yourself..."

"It was for myself, Mister Holmes. Now, it involves a woman... a woman whom I love. We have very strict ideas about such things in France, me more than most probably."

He said this quite simply. Holmes gave him an almost imperceptible nod of the head.

"Where is the Blue Diamond?" he whispered.

"Take my cane; it's over there, leaning against the mantelpiece...Hold the knob tightly in one hand and turn the iron ferrule with the other."

Holmes did as instructed and the knob came unscrewed. Inside was a ball of putty, and inside that, the Blue Diamond.

He examined it closely. It was genuine.

"Mademoiselle Destange is free, Monsieur Lupin."

"Free in the future as well as in the present? She has nothing to fear from you?"

"From anyone."

"No matter what happens."

"No matter what happens. I have forgotten her name and her address."

"Thank you. And *au revoir*, for we shall meet again, isn't that so, Mister Holmes?"

"I have no doubt about it."

A more or less heated discussion followed between the Detective and Ganimard. It was cut short by the Englishman.

"I am very sorry, Chief Inspector, to have to disagree with you, but I don't have any more time to argue with you. I leave for London in an hour."

"But... What about the Blonde Phantom?"

"I know of no such person."

"Only a moment ago, you said..."

"I know what I said, but take it or leave it. I have already handed you Lupin. Here is the Blue Diamond, which you may have the pleasure of handing to the Comtesse de Crozon yourself. I can't see that you have any reason to complain."

"But the Blonde Phantom..."

"Find her."

He put his hat on and walked away briskly, like a gentleman who has no desire to loiter once his business is done.

"Good-bye, Mister Holmes!" shouted Lupin. "Have a pleasant journey. I'll never forget the pleasant moments we spent together. And my kind regards to Dr. Watson!"

He received no reply.

"That's what we call taking English leave," he chuckled. "Ah, those worthy Englishmen do not have the same sense of panache that characterizes us Frenchmen, eh, Ganimard? Just think of the exit I would have made had our roles been reversed? With what exquisite civility I would have disguised my triumph... Bless my soul, Ganimard, what are you doing? Executing a search warrant? But there's nothing left, my friend! Not a scrap of paper! All my archives have been moved to a place of safety."

"Who knows? One can never tell."