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The Beekeeper's Apprentice, Or On The Segregation Of The Queen: Mary Russell And Sherlock Holmes, Book 1



Synopsis

From New York Times best-selling author Laurie R. King comes the book that introduced us to the ingenious Mary Russell - Sherlock Holmes mysteries. In 1915, Sherlock Holmes is retired and quietly engaged in the study of honeybees when a young woman literally stumbles into him on the Sussex Downs. Fifteen years old, gawky, egotistical, and recently orphaned, the young Mary Russell displays an intellect to impress even Sherlock Holmes - and match him wit for wit. Under his reluctant tutelage, this very modern 20th-century woman proves a deft protagonist and a fitting partner for the Victorian detective. In their first case together, they must track down a kidnapped American senator's daughter and confront a truly cunning adversary: a bomber who has set trip wires for the sleuths and who will stop at nothing to end their partnership. Full of brilliant deductions, disguises, and dangers, this first book of the Mary Russell - Sherlock Holmes mysteries is "wonderfully original and entertaining...absorbing from beginning to end." (Booklist). Named "One of the Century's Best 100 Mysteries" by the Independent Mystery Booksellers Association.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

After the death of her family, Mary Russell, a fifteen year-old, moves to a farm with her "evil" aunt. In one of her walks around the area she meets the famous Sherlock Holmes, who is retired and dedicates his hours to the study of bees. Right from the start the two main characters in the book match their wits and Holmes is surprised by the potential he sees in this young woman. He then decides to tutor her and introduce her to the art of investigative work. In the next few years, they go

through a few cases and Mary goes away to Oxford to continue her studies; but at one point they are faced with a more dangerous opponent, who wants to kill not only Holmes, but also Mary; even Dr. Watson and Mycroft are in danger. If you want to know the rest, you better read the book! In my opinion the author does a very good job in maintaining the particular characteristics that define the characters in Arthur Conan Doyle's books, especially in the case of Sherlock Holmes. It is amazing how you feel that the deductive work is done by exactly the same detective you knew from the past, and with the added benefit of a fresh mind assisting him! I was very pleased to see the ingenious way in which Laurie King connected this new series with the Conan Doyle's work. She concocted a story about her receiving the manuscripts of the different stories in the series some time ago, and that she is merely the editor. The manuscripts were of course written by the enchanting Mary Russell. Finally, let me tell you that, since I am an avid chess player, I thoroughly enjoyed the way in which Holmes uses a chess game with Mary to explain the strategy he was planning to utilize in one of their cases. I will definitely continue reading the books in this series, and if you haven't started yet, I recommend you do it now!

At least once or twice every year I find myself in a Holmes state of mind. Basil Rathbone makes numerous appearances on my screen at this time and books--by Conan Doyle as well as others--are strewn across the couch. And even though this has been going on for years, my first experience with Mary Russell and Laurie King's Holmes came only two days ago. A new name has indeed been added to my yearly Holmes phase. Laurie King's Holmes is subtle. And it is because of that that he is entirely believable, and what's more, remarkably likeable. As another reviewer noted, under King's hand and through Mary Russell's eyes the aging detective is human, almost fallible. Little gestures, small displays of emotion, makes the reader care about him on a personal level that cannot be reached when he is shown only as the master of deduction. King's treatment of this classic fictional figure has added a new element to my devotion. I absolutely cannot wait to read the rest of the series to see how Holmes progresses in this regard. Russell is a strong protagonist. Admittedly, when I first started the book I had a problem with the fact that she was fifteen years old--the voice didn't seem quite right, or believable. I suppose it's not completely out of the scope of reason that a fifteen year old was/is capable of having a quick, intelligent mind, but one that could compete on a level with Holmes? (One, no less, that had seemingly little challenging education other than the books she constantly had her nose in.) I'm not entirely sure about that. It may just be that she intrigued him with the intelligence she displayed for her age, but that doesn't seem to be the case, at least not totally. I just found it rather curious that King decided to have her meet Holmes

at such a young age. However, this was a very little thing in the overall scheme, and it might, in part, be explained away by the fact that she is actually telling the story from an older point-of-view. The set-up of the novel was wonderful in that the first half stayed true to the short stories of Conan Doyle being presented a case at a time as they were. Each case could have been read on its own, but added to the whole picture that the novel made. The final case is the focus, or the main mystery, and is a satisfying one at that. A good challenge for the budding partnership of Holmes and Russell, but not so much for the reader because once the leading clues are given there's very little to figure out from there. If the remaining Mary Russell books are of the same quality as 'The Beekeeper's Apprentice' then this series will be a fixture in my personal Holmes library. (As a side note, Carole Nelson Douglas's Irene Adler series pits another strong woman with a brilliant mind against poor Holmes--and she's straight out of Conan Doyle's story 'A Scandal in Bohemia'.)

I must say, this is one of my favorite books in the world. I first read it 5 years ago and it has never grown old. Anytime I am without a book to read, I pull it out and, once again, I am caught up in the world of Sherlock Holmes. The book is about Mary Russel, a 15 year old girl who one day meets a retired Sherlock Holmes near his home on the Sussex countryside. She instantly catches his attention and becomes his protege for the next few years. Being an orphan, she is practically adopted by Holmes, who teaches her many skills that are useful in their line of work. When Russell turns 18, she goes off to Oxford to study-of all things-theology. While there, Holmes is attacked by a mysterious enemy who's plan is to not only hurt Holmes, but his close friends as well. This leads Holmes and Russell on a daring chase for a suprising enemy. And as their search goes on, Russell grows from being Holmes' student into his partner. I have always found the Sherlock Holmes in Laurie R. King's books to be much more sociable, and likable, than the Holmes in Conan Doyle's books. Conan Doyle made him out as an omnipotent, all-powerful being. In Laurie R. King's books you see the more human side of him. I've enjoyed all of Laurie R. King's books in this series. They are, so far, in order: The Beekeeper's Apprentice, A Monstrous Regiment of Women, A Letter of Mary, The Moor, and O Jerusalem. I would recommend these books to anyone, especially someone who loves a good mystery.

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