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Valley Of Fear: BBC (BBC Radio Presents)



Synopsis

A coded warning of imminent danger sends Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson to the fortress-like country house of the reclusive Jack Douglas. When they arrive too late to prevent a tragic death, the great detective and his chronicler must follow a series of bewildering clues and find a murderer who has vanished into thin air.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Sherlock Holmes canon includes a total of 60 stories from the original author, AC Doyle. Of the 60, only four were full novels including this one. The rest are short stories published in five books, totaling 9 books. The first two stories penned by Doyle were the novels, *Study in Scarlet* (where Holmes and Watson first meet), and *A Sign of the Four* (which includes Watson meeting his wife). This is followed by short stories in book 3, the *Adventures of SH*. Ideally the stories are best read in order, but not critical. Unlike the rest of the canon, the two novels, *Hound of the Baskervilles* and *Valley of Fear*, can be read at any time - especially since they each defy the chronology. *Hound* was written about 8 years after the short story, *The Final Solution*, when Holmes died in a mortal struggle with the Napoleon of crime, Professor Moriarty, who was also killed. (But, Holmes doesn't die and is brought back, very cleverly and very credibly, 10 years later, in the story, *The Empty House*, written 2 years after *Hound*. Anyway, 10 years after all that Doyle wrote, *The Valley of Fear* - which is one of two stories that include Prof Moriarty - this is not a spoiler to the story and the Prof is

only talked about in present tense. I guess my point is, this novel, and Hound of the Baskervilles can be read at any time whereas everything else is slightly better if read in order. Okay, enough of the background on the canon. Valley of Fear is simply a great read with wonderful twists at the end that the reader will not likely see coming. I would put Valley and Hound as the two best novels, with Hound perhaps slightly better, but better is all about taste and preference. Anyway, this novel is broken down into two main parts, Part 1 is the Murder mystery, who killed...?

The last of the four complete Sherlock Holmes novels written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Valley of Fear gives the reader two plots for the price of one. More accustomed to writing short stories than well-developed novels, Doyle creates two story lines, only loosely connecting them. He then throws Moriarty, the arch-villain, into the mix, though Moriarty was killed off in a previous novel. In the first plot, which directly involves Sherlock Holmes, a letter warns, in code, that something dreadful will happen at Birlstone, an ancient manor house surrounded by a forty-foot moat. Before Holmes can act, however, the owner, Jack Douglas, is found shot to death, his face destroyed in the blast from a sawed-off shotgun. Douglas was an American, and the nature of his death and the weapon "proves" to the local police that the killer was also an American. As Holmes investigates, with the help of Scotland Yard, the mystery deepens. Douglas always raised the drawbridge at night, the moat was too big to leap, and there were no strangers in the house. Gradually, Holmes uncovers Douglas's background in America. In the second plot, a group of coal miners belonging to a secret society welcome a new member, Jack McMurdo, someone accused of murder in Chicago who needed to escape someplace where no one knew him. His lodge has recommended that he go to the Vermessa plain, "the Valley of Fear," and see Boss McGinty, the Bodymaster of the lodge there. McGinty and his men belong to a group which wreaks havoc on the community when it believes injustices have occurred. Seemingly above the law, they have avoided being caught, though rumor has it that a Pinkerton man has been sent to unmask the members of the group. Holmes plays little or no part in this whole section.

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