

Chapter Four

Office of the German ReichsKanzeller, Berlin, Friday, May 21, 1897,

Chlodwig Carl Viktor, Prince of Hohenlohe, Chancellor of Germany, and Prime Minister of Prussia, was glaring. The two men sitting opposite him at the small table looked down at their hands when they spoke, trying their best to avoid the heat of the Chancellor's gaze.

"Explain to me, gentlemen," he said, his slow, exact speech mimicking the tone one would use with a dull child, "how our agents can plan an operation for months, only to find the nest of traitors empty? Three times now we have had good intelligence on the location of these Anarchists, only to find they have slipped the net. Could there be a spy in our midst?"

Oberst (that is, Colonel) Adler, the head of the Security Service, twisted his hat in his hand and looked out the window at a passing bird before he replied. "I have studied the logs of all who were present for meetings concerning the operations, and the only person involved in every case was ...," he looked down, twisting his hat more viciously, "me."

The Chancellor snorted. "Then you are either the worst double spy in history, or the cleverest, to hide yourself in plain sight. What other explanation is there?"

Adler spread his hands before him. "I have none, Mein Herr. Coincidence is most unlikely. Somehow, they are getting intelligence from my office but are too clumsy to hide that fact effectively."

Herr Schork, the Chancellor's private secretary, had kept silent until now. He cleared his throat. The two older gentlemen looked at him as though the furniture had just spoken.

"Gentlemen, I have a proposal, if I may."

His superior looked down his nose but nodded. "Very well. A new idea would be welcome." "I think we need someone from outside to look for our spy. Someone who would not be known within our usual circles and could be discrete."

"But also someone we could trust!" Adler added. "Where could you find such a person?"

The Chancellor interrupted. "Herr Oberst, since you are a suspect, I request you leave the room before Schork and I continue this conversation. If you know the identity of our 'consultant,' the findings would be suspect if you are cleared."

Adler's jaw tightened as he glared at Schork, then he rose and left the room as quickly as his dignity allowed.

Once the breeze from the Security Chief's departure subsided, the Chancellor looked at Schork with a new respect. "You know of course, once this matter is settled it is unlikely you can ever work with Adler again? Not to worry. If you can resolve this matter to my satisfaction, you will find yourself promoted. Of course, if you do not, you will have made a bitter enemy of Adler with no profit to show for it. Now, the name of this remarkable individual?"

Schork swallowed at the implication of the Chancellor's words, then said, "You are aware I believe, of the fictional character, Sherlock Holmes?"

The Prince of Hohenlohe slammed the table before replying, "You want to employ a make-believe detective?"

"N-N-No Sir!" Schork stuttered. "But the man who inspired the character is very real. He has helped the police in more than one case. I suggest we call in Professor Joseph Bell, the real Sherlock Holmes!"