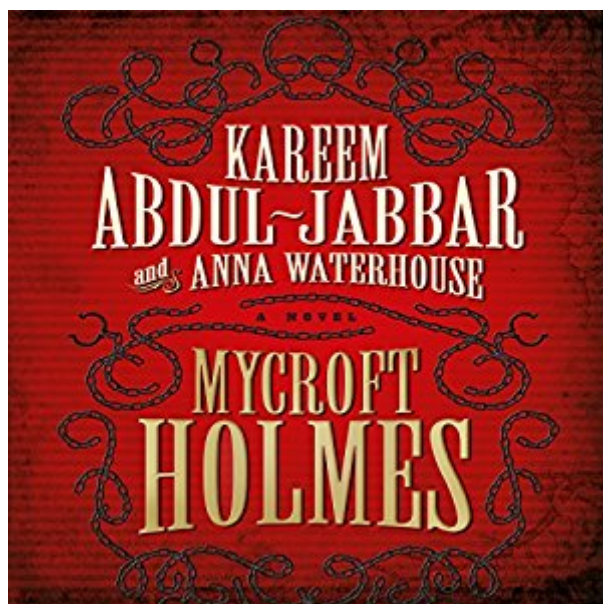


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Mycroft Holmes



Synopsis

"When I say, therefore, that [my brother] has better powers of observation than I...I am speaking the exact and literal truth." (Sherlock Holmes) This story occurs when Mycroft, an athletic Cambridge graduate, assists the secretary of State. He becomes embroiled in a mystery in Trinidad based on actual history. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar is a huge Holmesian, seven-foot-two tall, basketball's all-time leading scorer, and a US cultural ambassador. Anna Waterhouse is a professional screenwriter and script consultant.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There is no way to avoid mentioning that this book is written by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. It is often forgotten that aside from his career on the court he graduated from UCLA with an English/History major and has had a life-long love affair with Sherlock Holmes. He's proved his mettle as an author with his previous book contributions as well as being a columnist in Time. In this book Abdul-Jabbar spotlights Sherlock's older brother Mycroft. He's 23, engaged and looking forward to a successful career as at this young age he's already the secretary to the Secretary of War. He has an uncanny power of observation and deduction that sets him apart from others. His best friend Cyrus Douglas, a Negro tobacconist, tells Mycroft of the current incidents in his homeland of Trinidad. It seems that people are vanishing. Children are said to be found dead, drained of blood and if they have not been baptized they are condemned to walk the earth forever on little backwards-facing feet. Holmes reasons this is a mean ugly fate. Not to say

impractical. The legendary Lougarou and their companion demons the Douen are said to be responsible. When Mycroft's fiancée hears this tale she is horrified and decides to return to her birthplace and plantation in Trinidad to pursue the subject. Holmes and Douglas book ocean passage and will also investigate the matter. The Atlantic crossing is filled with murder and mayhem and unfortunately when they arrive in the Port of Spain in Trinidad things go even further downhill. As Mycroft himself laments he is assaulted, cut, poisoned and beaten and drags his closest friend through the thick of it. This is a book written in the manner of the popular turn-of-the-century "who-done-it".

Abdul-Jabbar is known to have a fondness for the Conan Doyle Sherlock Holmes stories. Here, he has allowed his fancy to imagine the early days not of Sherlock Holmes, but of his older brother Mycroft, who Sherlock always insisted was the true genius of the family. Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse try in this enjoyable and passably well written adventure to explain how Mycroft became what he was in later life "a retired civil servant living as a recluse. In this book, Mycroft is still young, only twenty-three, and recently appointed secretary to the Secretary of State for War, a post that if not yet important pointed toward a promising future in public service. Mycroft has a fiancée too "a delightful a free spirit with advanced ideas on the status of women and the need to care for the downtrodden named Georgiana. Georgiana comes from Trinidad, as does Mycroft's best friend, a black man named Cyrus Douglas. Sherlock is around too, thinking of college "Cambridge of course, all the Holmeses attend Cambridge. He has no intention yet of becoming a detective but Mycroft is already tutoring him in detection and fisticuffs. Now we're ready for the mystery. Little children are dying in Trinidad, drained of blood by the lougarou the locals say. Cyrus decides to return to his home island to investigate. When Georgiana hears of the massacres from Mycroft, she blanches, then turns to him --they're getting ready to celebrate the one-year anniversary of their engagement-- and tells him she must leave to return to her home country and right things. After a bit of backward and forward, Mycroft and Cyrus are on a steamer headed for the Carribeans. Bad things happen on board ship but they're only the preface to worse things in Trinidad.

I'm going to start with a minor item, but one that bothered me. The publisher chose to headline the description with, "A new novel written by NBA All-Star Kareem Abdul-Jabbar!" My minor gripe is there are 24 NBA All-Stars each year. Calling the leading scorer in NBA history and a standout player in many other respects an "NBA All-Star" is like calling Willie Mays a "Gold Glove outfielder,"

or Wayne Gretzky a "prolific NHL scorer." My major gripe is the exclamation point. Not to get all micro-aggressive here, but would the publisher have done that if Bill Bradley or Phil Jackson had been the author? How many excellent books and columns does KAJ have to pen before people catch on that he can write even though he can also dunk a basketball? Now that I've got that off my chest, on to the book. It's a fun light read with some real strengths, but unfortunately it also has some major flaws however you look at it. KAJ is most famous for inspiring histories, usually involving heroic figures whose achievements were marginalized or neglected due to prejudice. The writing is clear and pleasant, simple enough for young adults and non-book-lovers. More active readers might prefer a bit more dash and polish, but the accurate research and personal voice usually make up for the somewhat pedestrian style. This book delivers on historical research grounds, despite being a work of fiction. It's a painless--an enjoyable--way to learn some bits of history probably not included in your high school textbooks. Unfortunately, pervasive and intense violence distract from the history lesson and make the book unsuitable for most young adults. It's at the level of sadistic thrillers about serial killers or graphic war stories.

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