

I rang Patrick the following evening—trusting that our Sherlockian pursuers lacked the wherewithal to tap lines and trace telephone calls—to ask him to stow the trunk of memoirs with a third party for the present, and heard of the pack's confounding by our actor's cross-country sprint. Patrick told me he would spend another night sleeping in the Land Rover at our door, then load up our trunks and valuables and abandon his post on the morrow, leaving the actor to his play.

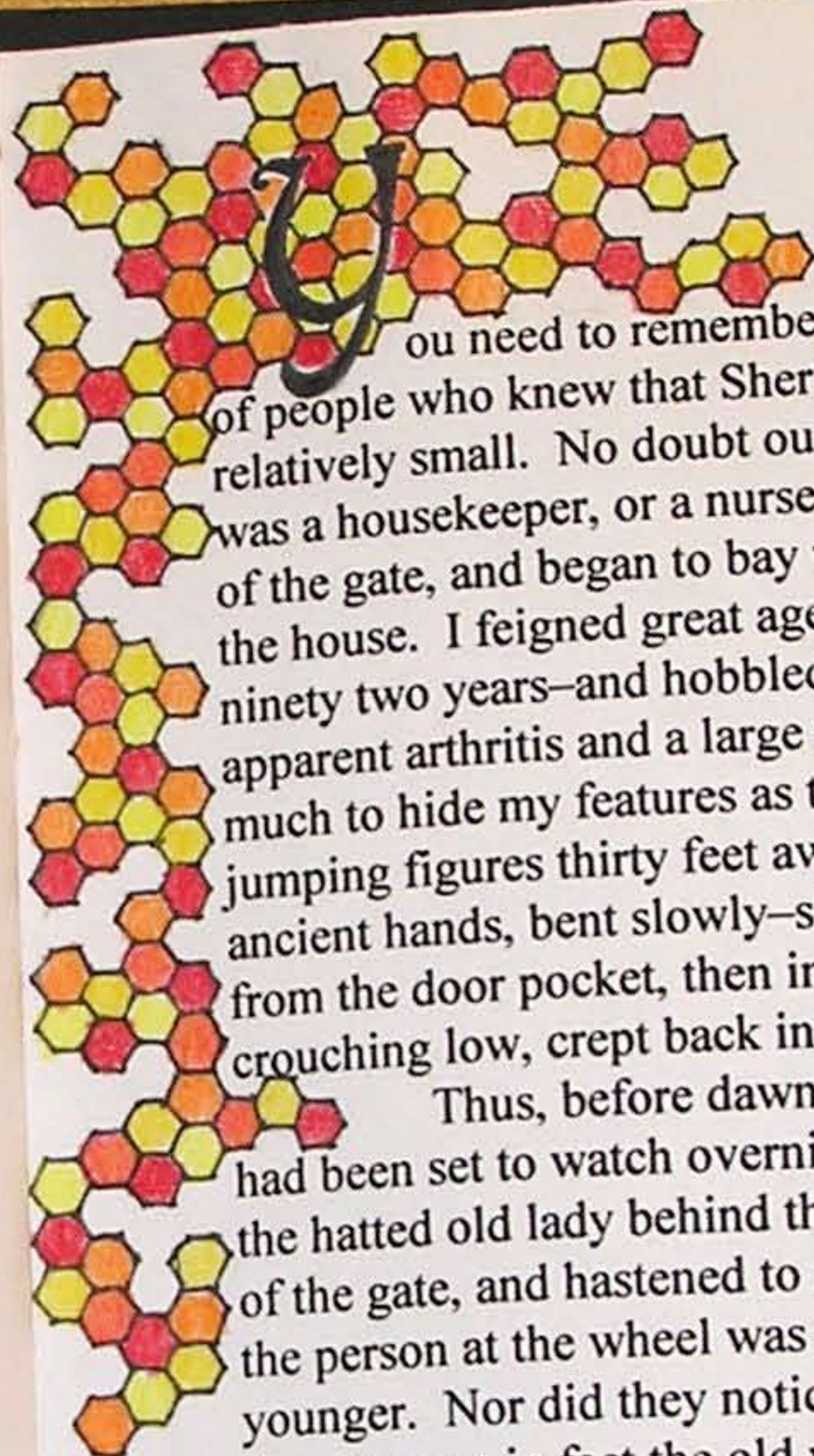
We spent a pleasant three days in my second home of Oxford, visiting old friends, pursuing our varied studies, and worrying not in the least that we would be discovered—the ancient city is generously endowed with ancient academics, and even the closing days of April are cool enough to justify hats and the occasional scarf.

On the fourth day, my medical student greeted our return with the news that a couple of rather odd Americans had come to the door while we were out. With sinking heart, I asked if they had worn lapel pins with pipes, deerstalker caps, or 221B. No, she replied—they were dogs.

"Holmes," I shouted up the stairs, "time to be off."

However, when I went to get the car out, they were lying wait.

... "Time to be off."



You need to remember, this was 1992, and the number of people who knew that Sherlock Holmes had a wife was relatively small. No doubt our pursuing Sherlockians thought I was a housekeeper, or a nurse—they were standing watch outside of the gate, and began to bay wildly when first I set foot out of the house. I feigned great age—admittedly not a difficult act, at ninety two years—and hobbled to the car, back bent with apparent arthritis and a large straw hat pulled down, not so much to hide my features as to explain why I hadn't noticed ten jumping figures thirty feet away. I got the door open with my ancient hands, bent slowly—slowly, to retrieve some small object from the door pocket, then inadequately closed the door and, crouching low, crept back into the house.

Thus, before dawn the next morning, the three who had been set to watch overnight from their hire car recognised the hatted old lady behind the wheel of the motor that pulled out of the gate, and hastened to follow—it being too dark to see that the person at the wheel was a foot shorter and seventy years younger. Nor did they notice that the brisk young man closing the gate was in fact the old woman they thought they were following.

Whistling, I went to finish my coffee and leave the house, on what promised to be a perfectly lovely May-Day morn.

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