a) A friend has recommended Holmes as someone who can help her. She is afraid that what she has to say will sound as if it has little to do with crime. The woman says that her name is Helen Stoner and that she lives with her stepfather.

b) Helen relates the last conversation she ever had with her sister, when she was asked if she had ever heard a whistle in the night. Helen said she had not. Then the two young women separated, each to go to her own room. They locked themselves in because of the strange and dangerous pets which roamed the grounds.

c) Dr. Roylott married Helen’s mother when they were all living in India. Soon after the marriage, Helen’s family returned to England. Dr. Roylott had always been difficult to live with, but he became increasingly strange and ill-tempered, particularly after the death of his wife.

d) Although there was an inquest to investigate the young woman’s sudden death, no evidence of foul play could be found. The shutters to her room had not been tampered with. Holmes asks Helen what she thinks happened. She suggests that the gypsies who stay in the grounds of the house might have had some part in her sister’s death.

e) Doctor Watson remembers past cases in which he has been involved with Sherlock Holmes. He says that this one is among the most extraordinary he can remember. He was not able to write it down before, because of a promise he made to a woman involved in the story.

f) The woman appears distressed. Holmes surprises her by being able to tell her a lot about herself and the way she has travelled up to London. The woman says that, although she does not have much money, she would like to ask Holmes’s advice.

g) During the night, Helen heard her sister cry out. Unlocking her own door, she hurried out to find her sister in the corridor, thrashing about, and saying something about a ‘speckled band.’ She was still trying to say more when she died.

h) Helen’s stepfather kept exotic pets sent to him from India, and behaved in ever more wild and violent ways. Helen tells Holmes how, although they lived a quiet and sheltered life, her sister met a young man and became engaged to be married. Two weeks before her marriage, however, she died very suddenly. Holmes asks her to go into detail, and she begins by describing the layout of the house.

i) The case begins when Holmes wakes Watson up early one morning to say that a young woman has called to consult him. They both go down to greet her.
j) Holmes and Watson arrive at Stoke Moran and are met by Helen, who tells them that Dr. Roylott is away for the day.

k) Holmes decides that he and Watson will travel down to the house that afternoon, avoiding Dr. Roylott, who is in London on business. Helen leaves, agreeing to meet the two men later. Holmes mulls over possible solutions to the mystery.

l) Holmes examines the floor and the wooden panelling. He discovers that the bell-rope in the bedroom does not work, and the ventilator, instead of leading to the air outside, gives onto another room. He finds out that both ventilator and bell-rope were put in at the same time.

m) Helen herself is now engaged to be married. Her stepfather has started some rebuilding on the house which means that she now sleeps in her sister's room. She too has heard a whistle in the night. Helen tells Holmes that she is so frightened that she slipped out of the house to ask his advice. He tells her she was quite right to do so.

n) Holmes returns at the end of the morning, having found out that, by the terms of his dead wife's will, Dr. Roylott will be ruined if either of his stepdaughters marry. Holmes and Watson set off for the house taking care to arm themselves, as the case is becoming dangerous.

o) Watson and Holmes are sitting quietly discussing the case when Dr. Roylott bursts into the room. He demands to know what his stepdaughter has been saying. Holmes refuses to answer.

p) Holmes examines the rooms, especially the one in which Helen now sleeps because of the building alterations. He is particularly interested in the windows and walls, and in a bell-rope in the room where Helen now sleeps.

q) Dr. Roylott leaves in a fury, having insulted and threatened Holmes, and demonstrating his strength by bending the poker. Holmes quietly straightens the poker and sets off to make some investigations into Dr. Roylott's financial position.

r) Holmes reveals to Helen that Dr. Roylott has been to see him in town. She is now even more frightened. Holmes reassures her by telling her that he is even more cunning than Dr. Roylott. He asks to be shown the layout of the house, and, in particular, the bedrooms.
s) Holmes talks about what he has found out by examining the rooms. He had expected to find the ventilator between Dr. Roylott’s and Helen’s sister’s.

t) Holmes tells Helen it is important that he and Watson spend the night in her bedroom without Dr. Roylott knowing. They will wait in the village inn for her to signal that her stepfather has gone to bed. Once she has signalled, Helen must go and sleep in her old room. Holmes and Watson will wait in her bedroom for further developments.

u) Holmes takes Watson through the evidence which had led him to expect a snake moving down the bell rope. He finishes by saying that, although he is in directly to blame for Dr. Roylott’s death, he cannot bring himself to regret it.

v) Holmes whispers to Watson not to go to sleep - his life might depend on it. The two men sit in silence for a long time. Suddenly Holmes springs up and lights a match. Watson sees Holmes beating at something on the bell rope with his cane.

w) The next room is Dr. Roylott’s bedroom, which Holmes examines carefully. He notices that a saucer of milk has been placed on top of the doctor’s iron safe. Holmes leaves the room feeling extremely troubled.

x) Suddenly there is a terrible cry from the room next door. The two men rush in to find Dr. Roylott dead, a strange speckled band coiled around his head. The band moves and reveals itself to be a poisonous snake.

y) Holmes and Watson make their way to the local inn to wait for Helen’s signal. As they wait, they see Dr. Roylott return as darkness falls. They discuss the case. Holmes is concerned that there is a great danger lying in wait for all of them.

z) Holmes carefully locks the snake away. The two men take Helen to her aunt’s and tell the police what has happened. Holmes talks of the way in which he had at first drawn a false conclusion.

zz) Holmes and Watson watch the lights go out in Helen’s house. Then, a couple of hours later, they see Helen’s signal and set off for the house. Holmes expects to meet with great danger. They make their way through the grounds and climb into the bedroom through the shutters which have been left open for them.