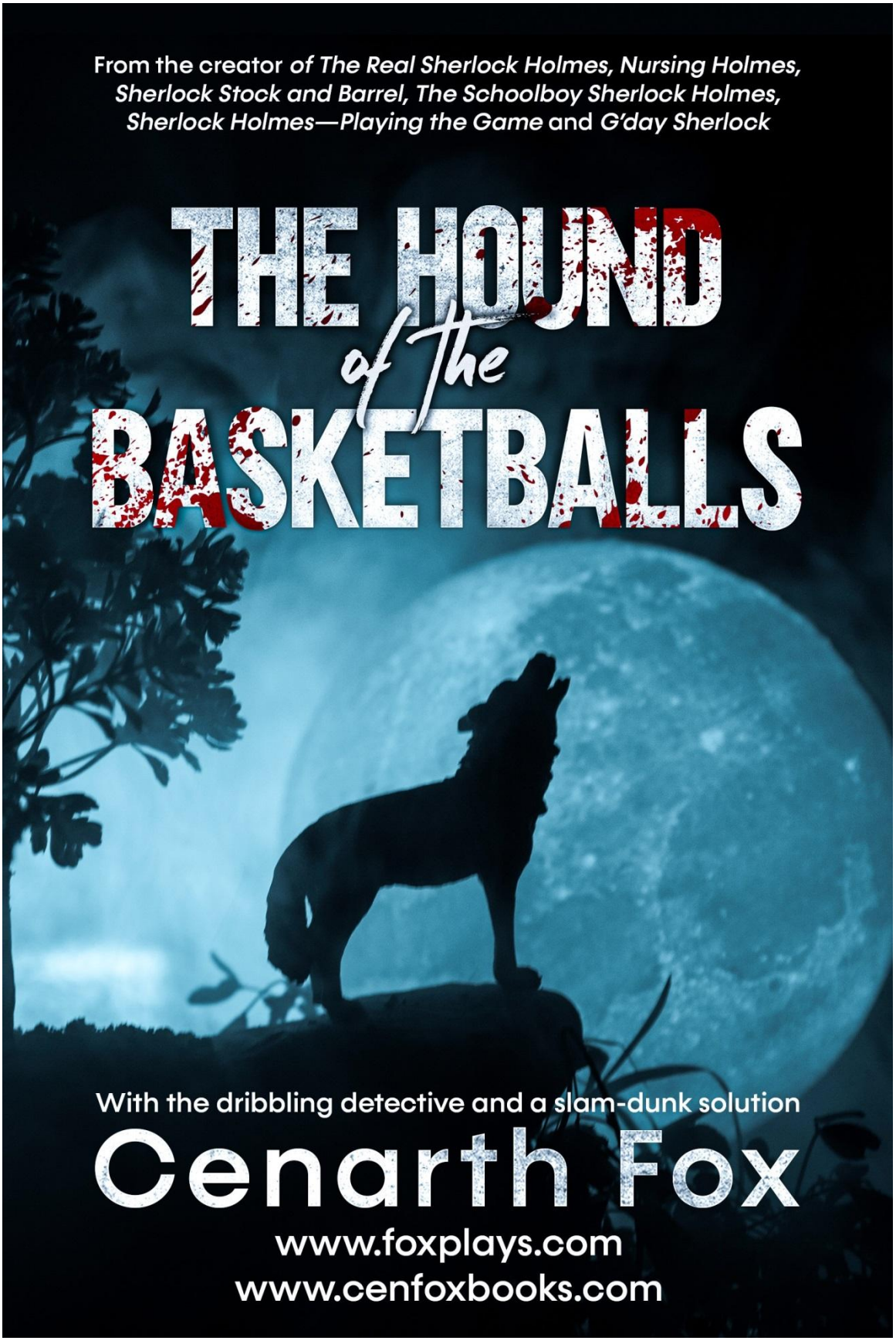

From the creator of The Real Sherlock Holmes, Nursing Holmes, Sherlock Stock and Barrel, The Schoolboy Sherlock Holmes, Sherlock Holmes—Playing the Game and G'day Sherlock
THE HOUND of the BASKETBALLS
With the dribbling detective and a slam-dunk solution
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The Hound
of the
Basketballs

By Cenarth Fox

A two-act mystery/comedy based on the famous tale by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

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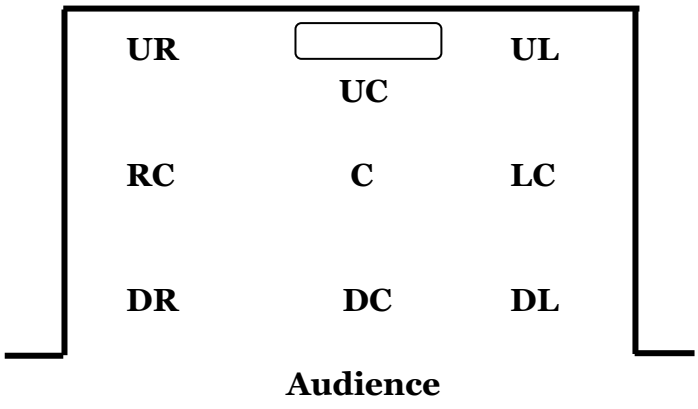
Synopsis

The original story involves a murderer seeking to inherit a large estate by killing the current owner and then his heir. The main point of interest is the method of killing. No gun, knife or poison but a wild hound, painted to look more ferocious, is let loose in a wild moorland area of Devonshire. The current owner of Baskerville (Basketball) Hall dies an unusual death seemingly of fright. His nephew and heir arrives from North America to inherit the estate but his life too is soon in danger. A local doctor, and the GP for the owner who died in mysterious circumstances, asks Sherlock Holmes to investigate the situation. The case begins.
The Hound of the Baskervilles is one of, if not the most popular tale in the Sherlockian canon of 60 stories written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. There are dozens of filmed versions of the story and many stage adaptations. This is another. It differs from many by being portrayed as a comedy and is not realistic in that there are no sets.
The change in the title suggests this version uses humour throughout. The lack of sets makes for cheaper production costs and allows the story to be told with scenes in different locations being imagined. Audiences are encouraged to use their imagination.
There are plenty of lighting cues and sound effects and both play an integral role in the staging.

Suggested Stage Setting

Each director will choose their own way of staging the play and the following is a suggestion. Perform on an empty stage (no set/s) with a black backdrop and black legs. Costumes are important. When chairs are used, they are taken on and off by the actors. Bentwood chairs are suggested. Through use of lighting, different areas of the stage are lit and the actors step in and out of these lit areas. Sound effects and music are used throughout to help tell the tale.

A dot matrix sign would be ideal to indicate various locations. A single rostrum, painted black, could be used UC. It has a few steps either end leading to the small platform. Photo of costumes worn in late Victorian England are commonplace.



Characters

SIR CHARLES BASKETBALL - middle-aged baronet (Played by FRANKLAND)
BARRYMORE - middle-aged butler at Basketball Hall
MRS BARRYMORE – housekeeper, middle-aged wife of the butler
SHERLOCK HOLMES
DR JOHN H. WATSON
DR MORTIMER - middle-aged GP
SIR HENRY BASKETBALL - middle-aged baronet
MRS HUDSON – middle-aged or older housekeeper (Played by MRS BARRYMORE)
CABBIE – London Hansom cab driver (Played by BARRYMORE)
STATIONMASTER – Paddington Station, voice only (Played by the STAGE MANAGER)
PERKINS - middle-aged wagonette driver at Basketball Hall (Played by LESTRADE)
POSTMASTER - middle-aged shopkeeper (Played by LESTRADE)
STAPLETON – middle-aged villain of the piece
BERYL – middle-aged wife of Stapleton
SELDEN – non-speaking role, middle-aged escaped convict (Played by BARRYMORE)
LAURA – middle-aged woman (Played by BERYL)
FRANKLAND – senior gent, loopy (Played by BARRYMORE or MRS BARRYMORE in drag)

Notes
Middle-aged means anything from 25 to 60
You could use 17 actors but by doubling/tripling as shown above, only 8 are needed – 6M and 2F
Obviously costume changes, different accents, etc for actors playing more than one character

ACT ONE

Scene 1

(Curtain rises on a dark stage. Suddenly a flashing sign comes alive. Basketball Hall shines through the gloom. Lighting introduces a full moon)

FX *Wind through the trees.*
(SIR CHARLES enters, stops, withdraws fob watch and checks time)

CHARLES Where is the woman? I'm sure we said 10pm. *(He sets off again only to stop as if shot)*

FX *Howl of wild beast*

CHARLES *(Terrified)* What the hell was that?
(He peers into the gloom, sees something, panics and sets off running)

FX *Running music is heard*
(SIR CHARLES runs around the stage looking back in terror. He could go up and down the UC rostrum. HE finishes DC, stops, turns to face audience where his face is electrified. He screams which lingers for a short time through the silence)

FX BLACKOUT, kill music
(Pause. SIR CHARLES is lying on the ground. We see two torches offstage)

B'MORE *(Offstage)* Did you hear that noise?

MRS B *(Offstage)* I told my brother, no yelling.

B'MORE *(Enters and moves downstage shining torch)* Sir Charles hasn't touched his nightcap.

(MRS B enters shining torch and moves away from husband. She spots body and screams)

B'MORE *(Hurries to her)* Keep it down. You know Sir Charles hates unnecessary noise.

MRS B *(Indicates body)* Not any more.

B'MORE *(Kneels examining body)* My God, it's Sir Charles.

MRS B And he's dead.

B'MORE So that's why he didn't finish his nightcap.

MRS B Send for Doctor Mortimer.

B'MORE *(Stands)* Send for the vicar more like.

MRS B *(Frightened)* Is this …? *(She grabs her husband)*

B'MORE *(Upset)* Mind the jacket. *(She lets go)*

MRS B I'm so sorry.

B'MORE You were saying. Is this …?

MRS B *(Frightened to speak)* … the curse of the Basketballs?

FX *Dramatic music, thunder clap, lightning flash*
BLACKOUT
(BARRYMORES and SIR CHARLES exit. HOLMES and WATSON enter each with a chair)
MUSIC fades

Scene 2

(Restricted lights come up DR where HOLMES is seated on a single chair and WATSON stands admiring a walking stick)

HOLMES Well, Watson, what do you make of it?

WATSON *(Surprised)* How did you know what I was doing? I believe you have eyes in the back of your head.'

HOLMES Twas your reflection in the coffee-pot, old man. Now we've missed our visitor who left his walking stick but you know my methods. Let me hear you construct the man by an examination of his stick.

WATSON *(Examining stick)* Well I'd say he's an elderly country doctor, well respected and who does a great deal of walking.

HOLMES Why so?

WATSON The ferrule is worn and the once fine stick's now knocked about a bit.

HOLMES Anything else?

WATSON This inscription, "Friends of the C.C.H." I guess it's a presentation from friends of the Something or Other Hunt.

HOLMES Really, Watson, you excel yourself.

WATSON *(Chuffed)* Oh? Do you mean that? Really?

HOLMES You must stop all this nonsense about you being a silly old duffer.

WATSON *(Suddenly miffed)* Silly old duffer? Who said that?

HOLMES I believe Nigel Bruce was the first.

WATSON The fiend!

HOLMES You've proved yet again that not being a genius doesn't stop you helping those who are.

WATSON *(Sulks)* Here we go again.

HOLMES *(Stands, holds out hand and accepts and examines the stick)* I think a presentation to a doctor would more likely come from a Hospital than a Hunt and the letters C.C. suggest Charing Cross.

WATSON *(Grumbles)* Oh yes, yes. You may be right.

HOLMES And what other inferences may we gather?

WATSON He once worked in London but has moved to the country.

HOLMES Excellent but surely he was not a senior doctor who would have continued in town. Our visitor was a young house physician, *(Indicates stick)* absent-minded and the owner of a medium-sized dog.

WATSON *(Scoffs)* Oh really, Holmes. How could you possibly know that? *(Jumps in quickly pointing at his friend)* And for pity's sake do not say, "Elementary my dear Watson".

HOLMES On his many country walks, our visitor has allowed his dog to carry this very stick. *(He points)* See here, the canine's bite marks. *(WATSON examines)* And I think this is where you say …

WATSON *(Unaware of the cue)* By jove!

HOLMES The bite marks are too broad for a terrier and not broad enough for a mastiff.
(He looks out an imaginary window downstage)

WATSON What are you, a judge at Crufts?

HOLMES I'd say it's a curly-haired spaniel.

WATSON Oh now you're showing off.

FX *Knock on door.*

HOLMES *(Calling)* Come in.
(Dr MORTIMER enters)

M'MER My stick! *(He accepts stick)* I thought I left it at the Shipping Office. This stick means the world to me.

HOLMES And to your dog.

M'MER Oh yes and of course to my curly-haired Spaniel. *(WATSON reacts)*

HOLMES Your stick was a presentation, I see.

M'MER Yes from Charing Cross Hospital. *(WATSON reacts again)*

HOLMES *(Indicating)* This is my friend, Doctor Watson.

M'MER Ah, the great chronicler himself. I have long admired your work, sir.

WATSON *(Chuffed)* Really? How kind.

M'MER But tell me, have you ever considered changing your proof-reader?
(Again WATSON'S joy vanishes in an instant)

HOLMES Now sir, to the purpose of your visit.

M'MER As for you, Mr Holmes, my admiration knows no bounds. And now we have met I am shocked at the size of your cranium.

HOLMES Shocked?

M'MER Your dolichocephalic skull and its well-marked supra-orbital development fascinate me. *(Pause)* May I run my finger along your parietal fissure?

HOLMES *(Annoyed)* Certainly not.

M'MER Forgive my over-the-top reaction, sir, but I confess I covet your skull.

HOLMES Yes, yes, but we both know sir, you haven't called twice to my rooms for the purpose of calibrating my custard.

WATSON You're what?

HOLMES It's a non-medical term, Watson, meaning one's bonce.

WATSON Oh noggin.

HOLMES Yes, noodle, noddle and nut.

M'MER You are correct as always, Mr Holmes. I am here because I'm Mr Thicky and have been confronted with a seriously tricky problem.

HOLMES Then kindly be seated, sir, and spill the beans.
(HOLMES and MORTIMER are seated, WATSON observes)

M'MER I have a document, Mr Holmes, given to me by the late Sir Charles Basketball.
(He produces folded ancient document)

HOLMES An early ancient century document, unless it is a forgery.

M'MER *(Surprised)* How can you say that, sir?'

WATSON It's his thing.

HOLMES May I see it? *(MORTIMER hands HOLMES the document which he studies)* It appears to be some sort of statement.

M'MER It is the ancient legend of the family Basketball.

HOLMES But you wish to consult me on a modern issue.

M'MER I do but tis related to the legend. May I read that to you?

HOLMES If you must.
(HOLMES returns document then leans back, places his fingers together and closes his eyes)

FX *(Scary music begins softly. Dim the lights while concentrating on MORTIMER. You could show a scene from one of the old black and white movies of the story if copyright allows at point below in MORTIMER'S reading and if you have a screen to descend)*

M'MER *(Clears his throat)* The legend of the Hound of the Basketballs began with Sir Hugo; a dirty rotten scoundrel. He lusted after a local farmer's daughter but the young woman despised the landowner avoiding him like the plague. Sir Hugo fumed, gathered a few of his appalling drinking pals, waited till the maiden was alone on the farm, then rode in and kidnapped her.

WATSON The bounder, the fiend, the absolute cad and rotter. *(OTHERS look at WATSON who backs down)* Please carry on.

M'MER Back to the Hall they rode with their terrified prisoner. She was locked in an upstairs room as Sir Hugo caroused. He went upstairs to check on his prize, found the room empty and exploded with rage. The plucky young woman escaped and fled into the night. Her family's farm was ten miles away and on foot in the darkness, her journey was a nightmare.

FX *Change music to louder and more scary. Old movie scene could be shown here.*
Downstairs, Sir Hugo leapt upon the dining table and swore revenge. He screamed for the hounds to be let loose, and with his horse saddled, he leapt aboard and fled.
His drunken guests mounted their steeds and followed.
Hurtling through the night, they came upon a shepherd who could barely speak. He saw a sight which scared him half to death - Sir Hugo was being chased by a hound from Hell.
Sir Hugo's magnificent horse galloped towards them, riderless. The pack of hounds cowered then fled the moor.

The mood oozed terror. In trepidation, Sir Hugo's pals crept forward. In the moonlight they discovered the body of the young woman, dead from fear. Her body didn't scare them and nor did that of Sir Hugo's. But what stood over his body put the fear of God into his three friends.

A giant black beast, bigger than any hound ever seen, stood over the landowner's corpse. His friends froze then gasped as the beast ripped out the throat of Sir Hugo before turning its blood slobbering jaws and gleaming eyes upon the horsemen. All three men shrieked and rode like hell back across the moor their screams bouncing off the rocks.

That night one of the three died of fright and the others were broken men for the rest of their days.

FX *Music fades, film fades and lights return to normal*
(MORTIMER folds the document and pockets it)

M'MER And that gentlemen is the legend of The Hound of the Basketballs.

HOLMES *(Not moved)* Is that it?

M'MER Do you not find it interesting, Mr Holmes?

HOLMES I don't collect fairy tales.

WATSON Well my heart is still pounding and I thought it was beautifully read.

M'MER *(Produces folded newspaper)* Then perhaps a recent newspaper article may appeal. *(He reads and HOLMES is interested)* The recent sudden death of Sir Charles Basketball has cast a gloom over Devonshire. He was a kind and generous man and the inquest into his death, though not definite, at least put paid to any superstitious nonsense. His friend and medical attendant, Dr James Mortimer, told the coroner of the various health problems which affected Sir Charles.

HOLMES So it was a heart attack.

M'MER I arrived soon after the body was discovered and at first refused to believe it was Sir Charles.

WATSON You didn't recognize your friend?

M'MER His face was incredibly distorted.

HOLMES Who else spoke at the inquest?

M'MER The butler, Barrymore, said his master's footsteps were unusual.

HOLMES How so?

M'MER At first they were normal then appeared as if Sir Charles was walking on his toes.

WATSON Perhaps he was trying to reach something or did he once train as a ballet dancer?

HOLMES And the coroner's verdict?

M'MER Natural causes, being based on my evidence of the poor man's health problems.

HOLMES So now, sir, let us hear what you *didn't* say.

M'MER *(Nervous)* I choose not to say what I saw, Mr Holmes, because as a man of science I could never subscribe to superstition.

WATSON By jove.

M'MER I know Sir Charles believed in the legend of the Hound. Just before his death, I arrived at the Hall and Sir Charles looked like death warmed up. Suddenly he stared at the moor and gasped. I turned and saw a large black beast disappearing into the night.

HOLMES And?
M'MER I looked and found nothing. But Sir Charles was so distressed I stayed the night. In the morning I prescribed a trip to London and he was due to leave the day after he died.
HOLMES So you withheld that incident from the corner?
M'MER Yes as did Barrymore. He claimed there were no marks on the ground around the body of Sir Charles. But there were.
HOLMES Footprints?
M'MER Yes, footprints.
HOLMES A man's or a woman's?
(MORTIMER hesitates and when he speaks, he whispers)
M'MER Mr Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound.
FX *Lightning flash, thunder clap with dramatic music. All three men stare out front with fear on their faces.*
BLACKOUT *with dramatic music which fades*

Scene 3

(Lights return with HOLMES now excited. He could have changed his position)
HOLMES You saw these footprints?
M'MER As clearly as I see you.
HOLMES And you said nothing?
M'MER Had I done so, I would have promoted the legend of the family curse.
HOLMES *(Up and moving)* Clear a space, Watson. Let us recreate the scene.
(The chairs are moved and the living room at Baker Street becomes the grounds of the Hall in Devonshire) Now you arrived at night.
M'MER I did. It was damp and raw.
HOLMES Watson, the lights if you please.
(WATSON moves to imaginary light switch)
FX *Lights dim, gradually add mysterious music*
M'MER I found Sir Charles in the Yew Alley some fifty yards from the summer-house.
HOLMES Right, we need a body. Watson, if you'd be so kind.
WATSON *(Complaining)* Oh why am I always the stiff?
(He lies down becoming SIR CHARLES)
HOLMES Now these footprints, Dr Mortimer. Where were they?
M'MER *(Walks a little upstage of the body)* They were some twenty yards from Sir Charles.
HOLMES *(Produces magnifying glass and looks at floor)* And nobody else noticed them, only you?
M'MER Yes sir.
HOLMES But why, what caused you to notice them?
M'MER I have already told you why, Mr Holmes. I know the legend.
HOLMES *(Fascinated, moving to body)* Oh Doctor Mortimer, if only you had called me in once Sir Charles met his fate.
WATSON *(Raises a hand)* May I get up? *(Is ignored)*
M'MER I could not have called you because even the world's greatest consulting detective would not have solved this case.
HOLMES Because it involves the supernatural?
M'MER I did not say that.

HOLMES No, but you think it.
(HOLMES and MORTIMER are deep in discussion and move so they are either side of WATSON. He wants to stop their discussion and come back to reality. He sits up)

M'MER Mr Holmes, since the death of Sir Charles … *(MORTIMER stops and he and HOLMES look at WATSON. He rolls his eyes and returns to his death position)* several experienced and level-headed men have told me they have seen a creature upon the moor which is a dead ringer for the Hound of the Basketballs. Their tales are so vivid no-one, *no-one* now will venture onto the moor at night.

HOLMES And you, a trained man of science, believe it to be supernatural?

M'MER I do not know what to believe.

HOLMES All my cases concern real people and I have no time for ghosts. But I find those footprints near the body to have a certain attraction.

M'MER And not only the footprints but the diabolical ability to rip out a man's throat.

HOLMES So you *are* a believer in the supernatural. *(Addresses his friend)* What do you think Watson? *(No reaction)* Watson!

WATSON *(Sitting up)* Oh I'm alive now am I? *(Helped to stand by MORTIMER and HOLMES)*

HOLMES Do you support your fellow medico's belief in the supernatural?

WATSON I'm sorry I was busy being Sir Charles.

M'MER I should have been clear from the first, Mr Holmes. I do not require your services to investigate the death of my patient and friend but to advise on how I should deal with his nephew, Sir Henry Basketball.

HOLMES Sir Henry Basketball is the heir to Sir Charles?

M'MER The sole heir and as I am the executor of Sir Charles's will, I am afraid that if Sir Henry, travels to Devonshire and the legend of the hound is true, there will be no more Basketballs.

FX *Brief burst, one chord, of dramatic music*

WATSON *(Shocked)* No more Basketballs!

HOLMES Where is this heir?

M'MER We found him farming in Canada but right now, *(Checks his watch)* he's landed at Southampton and is on a train to Waterloo. I am due to meet Sir Henry and have no idea what to say to him.

WATSON I find "Hello" or "How do you do" works rather well.

M'MER All the good work done for the county by Sir Charles will wither and die if a Basketball doesn't return to the Hall.

HOLMES But if your supernatural nonsense is true, Sir Henry is in as much danger in London as in Devonshire. Evil is able to cross borders.

M'MER *(Distressed)* Oh no! Then what do you suggest?

HOLMES Return here at ten o'clock tomorrow morning with Sir Henry and I will reveal my plan for his safety.

M'MER *(Greatly relieved)* Mr Holmes, how can I ever thank you?

HOLMES *(Dismissing him)* Goodbye, Dr Mortimer.
(MORTIMER departs but stops at the "door" when HOLMES speaks)
Dr Mortimer, your stick.

M'MER *(Handed the stick)* Oh silly me, I'd forget my head if it wasn't screwed on. Good day, gentlemen. *(He exits)*

WATSON Good day, Holmes. *(Picks up hat)* I'm off to my club. *(Stops at "door")*

FX *Scene change music begins softly*

HOLMES Please oblige me, Watson and have the tobacconist deliver a massive amount of shag tobacco.

WATSON Cocaine *and* nicotine. *(Exits shaking head)*

HOLMES And now for Devonshire.

FX *Lights fade to* **BLACKOUT**. *MUSIC swells for a few seconds*

Scene 4

(MUSIC fades and light come up on a small part of the stage away from 221B)

FX *Steam train whistle and, if possible, a puff of smoke or steam billows in from the wings. Crowd noises as at a station continue*
(SIR HENRY, dressed for travel, enters holding a bag/case in each hand. He looks around hoping to meet the man who agreed to collect him from the station. He has his back to MORTIMER who steps into the light holding a basketball and bounces it. The sound causes HENRY to turn)

HENRY Dr Mortimer?

M'MER Sir Henry? *(They juggle bags and basketball to shake hands)* I thought about a sign with your name but chose a visual clue instead.

HENRY It worked a treat. Basketball was invented by a Canadian.

M'MER Really, I didn't know that. How was your trip?

HENRY Troubling.

M'MER Oh.

HENRY I am still distressed at the news of my uncle's death but more so not knowing its cause.

M'MER What have you heard?

HENRY Only that he ventured out late at night in the cold and rain, smoked a cigar or two then went running in the Yew Alley on his tippy-toes. Was he in training for something?

M'MER I fear there is much you do not know, Sir Henry. Have you heard of the legend of …. *(The Hound of the Basketballs)*

FX *Steam locomotive whistle*
(This drowns our MORTIMER'S final words)

HENRY I'm sorry I missed that.

M'MER I need to tell you about … *(The Hound of the Basketballs)*

FX *Another steam locomotive whistle covers what MORTIMER says.*

HENRY I'm sorry but my lip-reading skills are basic at best.

M'MER *(Guiding him away)* Let's get you settled in your hotel.

HENRY Okay, thank you. *(They exit together)*

FX *Station crowd noises fade. Lights crossfade – down on Waterloo station and up at 221B Baker Street. HOLMES is seated with a large map open on his lap)*

Scene 5

WATSON *(Offstage coughs then knocks on "door". Calls)* Holmes, are you in there?
(Watson enters coughing and waving his hand/s to dispel smoke)

HOLMES Have you caught cold, Watson?
WATSON No, it's your poisonous shag tobacco.
HOLMES I suppose it *is* pretty thick.
WATSON Thick! It's a London pea-souper *indoors*.
HOLMES Well open a window, man.
(Watson moves downstage and mimes opening a window. He sucks in the fresh air from Baker Street)
FX *Sounds of horses and cabs are heard*
WATSON I believe, Holmes, you have been here all day.
HOLMES No, Watson, I have been in Devonshire.
WATSON In spirit of course.
HOLMES Here is an Ordnance map of the district with Basketball Hall smack in the middle.
(WATSON leans over his friend's shoulder and observes)
WATSON Is it Basketball Hall or Basketball Court? *(Ignored)*
HOLMES Here is the moor where the legend began, and here the hamlet of Grimpen where our absent-minded doctor lives. And here is the Princetown prison.
WATSON If any prisoner escaped, they'd never survive the moor.
HOLMES This desolate and lifeless moor is a perfect setting for evil.
WATSON Ah, so the great detective *does* believe in the supernatural.
HOLMES *(Displeased, an attack builds on WATSON)* I didn't say that. I've never said that. Tell me when and where I said I believe in ghosts.
WATSON All right, all right, keep your shirt on. Sherlock Holmes rejects the supernatural.
HOLMES *(Gets up and wanders to close the window)* Yet certain questions fascinate me.
FX *Baker Street sounds fade*
WATSON Such as?
HOLMES Why did an elderly man go out on a cold night? Why wait by a gate and smoke cigars? Why run from the house and not to it? And whom was he waiting to meet?
WATSON *(His excitement builds)* He had an assignation? There's a woman involved? Is she young and beautiful and single? God I hope so.
HOLMES *(Returns to his map)* Steady old man. What time is it?
WATSON *(Checks)* Ah, nearly 10.
HOLMES Then Dr Mortimer and Sir Charles are due any minute.
WATSON No, they're due at 10 am tomorrow morning. It's nearly 10 *p*m.
HOLMES Watson, we cannot delay. The game is afoot.
WATSON *(Shaking head)* Oh all right, it's nearly 10 *a*m.
(Brighten lighting as it's now day)
FX *Knock on door*
HOLMES Our guests are on time. Kindly show them in.
(WATSON mimes opening door. MORTIMER and SIR HENRY enter)
M'MER Good morning, gentlemen. This is Sir Henry Basketball.
HENRY *(Greeting HOLMES)* Mr Holmes, had not my friend proposed we call upon you, I would have come anyway. I have a puzzle of my own.
HOLMES Pray be seated, gentlemen. *(Visitors sit)*
HENRY *(Hands envelope to HOLMES)* I received this letter at the Northumberland Hotel.

HOLMES *(Removes and reads letter)* Who knew you were staying there?
HENRY No-one. We only decided after Dr Mortimer and I met at Waterloo.
HOLMES Then someone is deeply interested in your movements.
WATSON What of the letter, Holmes?
HOLMES *(Reading)* "As you value your life or your reason, keep away from the moor".
HENRY Now Mr Holmes, what in thunder is the meaning of that, and who has such an interest in my affairs?
HOLMES Dr Mortimer, do you consider this to involve the supernatural?
M'MER No but the sender may believe the business is supernatural.
HENRY *(Upset)* The business! What business? You speak in riddles, gentlemen and obviously know more about my life than do I.
HOLMES Relax, Sir Charles and all will soon be revealed. Watson, yesterday's *Times* if you please. *(Returns letter and envelope to SIR HENRY)*
WATSON *(Hands newspaper to his friend)* Your paper, Holmes.
HOLMES *(Opens paper)* On this inside page certain words have been removed;
(Shows newspaper to OTHERS) words which now appear in your letter.
HENRY *(Shocked)* By thunder, you're right!
HOLMES The words 'keep away' and 'from the' are cut from one article.
HENRY But how could you know which newspaper has been used?
HOLMES Because that is my special hobby.
WATSON Holmes is an expert in fronts.
HOLMES Fonts, Watson, fonts. Although I confess I once confused the typeface of the *Nether Regions Weekly* with the *Boggy Bottom Bugle*.
HENRY Amazing. And you say someone cut out these words with scissors.
HOLMES Short-bladed nail scissors as the cutter took two snips over 'keep away'.
HENRY Remarkable. And so this person used paste to …
HOLMES Gum.
HENRY Incredible. The writer used gum to stick the words on the letter.
HOLMES And did so in a hurry as witnessed by the crooked lines of text.
HENRY That is brilliant.
WATSON Brilliant indeed. But ask him what the writer had for breakfast. Go on, go on.
(Ignored as WATSON'S questions are often ignored)
HOLMES The handwriting on the envelope suggests both pen and ink have given the writer trouble. Using his own familiar pen would not produce such splutters. This was written in an hotel. If we could examine the waste-paper baskets of the hotels round Charing Cross and find the remains of a mutilated *Times* inner page, we could lay our hands on the person who sent your letter.
M'MER Absolutely first class.
HOLMES Now Sir Henry, has anything else of interest happened to you since arriving in London? Have you been followed or watched?
HENRY Why in thunder should I be followed or watched?
HOLMES We're coming to that. So you have nothing else to report?
HENRY Only that someone pinched one of my boots.
M'MER Mislaid surely.
HENRY I put them outside my room to be cleaned and this morning one was missing.

WATSON Right or left?

HOLMES One boot seems a singularly useless thing to steal.

HENRY Useless or not, I think it's time you kept your promise and gave me a full account of what we are all driving at.

HOLMES Quite so. Dr Mortimer if you please.
(MORTIMER produces document with legend and proceeds to read. His voice drops as indicated and rises again for the climax, again as indicated. HOLMES upstages the reading by moving downstage and looking through the imaginary window down into Baker Street. He is looking for anyone who may be following SIR CHARLES. HOLMES stands to one side and looks surreptitiously so as not to be seen by anyone below)
(You could drop the lights on the trio upstage and highlight HOLMES on point duty)

M'MER *(Reading)* It was a dark and stormy night when the blaggard Sir Toby Basketball, along with his pathetic pals, rode out to kidnap a fair young maiden.
(Reading becomes softer as HOLMES dominates proceedings)
These evil men were lawless and sociopaths to boot. They kidnapped the girl and returned to Basketball Hall. They caroused and boasted of the debauchery they planned. But the maiden tricked them and escaped across the moor.
(Reading begins a crescendo as lights crossfade from HOLMES to TRIO as the detective moves upstage for the denouement)

M'MER Enraged, Sir Toby rode into the night. Across the moor he galloped his hounds and men in pursuit. Twas then the tragic denouement exploded. On the wild and desolate moor, the hounds scarpered, the maiden carked it, and Sir Toby's chums saw their friend have his throat ripped out by the Hound of the Basketballs.

HENRY *(Relaxed considering)* I first heard of the hound when still in the nursery. It's the pet story of my family. But is it a case for the police or the priest?

M'MER Precisely.

HENRY But what of my letter?

HOLMES Someone wants to warn you of danger.

HENRY Or scare me away.

HOLMES Indeed which brings us to the question, Sir Henry; is it wise for you to go to Basketball Hall.

HENRY My answer is fixed, Mr Holmes. There is no man upon earth who can prevent me from going to the home of my own people.

WATSON Good show.

HENRY I need time to consider all you have told me. Suppose you and Dr Watson join us at my hotel for luncheon.

HOLMES Is that convenient to you, Watson?

WATSON Perfectly.

HOLMES Shall I call you a cab?

HENRY *(Starting to exit)* I'd prefer to walk. Good morning, gentlemen.

M'MER *(Exits with HENRY)* I'll join you, Sir Henry.
(The visitors exit and HOLMES explodes. He dashes offstage calling as he goes)

HOLMES Quick, Watson! There's not a moment to lose.

WATSON *(Confused)* Why? What's happened?

HOLMES Get a move on, man. *(Enters with top hat and cane)* We're leaving – now!
LIGHTS fade to **BLACKOUT**

(HOLMES exits with WATSON grabbing a hat and stick and following his friend)

FX *Traffic sounds from Baker Street*
LIGHTS come up downstage and HENRY and MORTIMER enter walking across the stage. They are in Baker Street. About half way across, they stop and look in imaginary shop window. HOLMES and WATSON enter, see their quarry and HOLMES stops his friend. HENRY and MORTIMER continue across stage and exit.

HOLMES Wait, Watson. *(Pointing)* See that hansom cab across the street?

WATSON The one moving slowly following Sir Henry and Dr Mortimer with the man inside having piercing eyes and a bushy black beard which looks suspiciously false.

HOLMES Excellent observation, Watson. Come on.
(HOLMES goes to move but stops when WATSON calls)

WATSON Too late, Holmes. He saw us and fled. Who was he?

HOLMES No idea.

WATSON A spy?

HOLMES We know Sir Henry has been followed since arriving in London. When Dr Mortimer was reading the legend, I strolled over to the window looking for suspicious characters in Baker Street.

WATSON I remember.

HOLMES We are dealing with a clever man, Watson.

WATSON What a pity we didn't get the number of the cab.

HOLMES Two oh seven four. Kindly make a note.

WATSON *(Writing in notepad)* Two oh four seven. *(sic)*

HOLMES Seven four.

WATSON Oh two seven four. *(sic)*

HOLMES Come, Watson, the Northumberland Hotel awaits.
(They exit with lights fading to **BLACKOUT** *and street sounds fading)*

Scene 6

HENRY *(Offstage and angry)* They're playing me for a sucker.
(Lights up UL. HENRY enters clutching an old black boot)

M'MER *(Enters pacifying his friend)* Come, Sir Henry, I'm sure there's a simple explanation.

HENRY First a new brown boot and *(Indicating)* now an old black boot.

M'MER Wait! Here comes Mr Holmes and Dr Wilson *(sic)*.

HOLMES Gentlemen, is there a problem?

HENRY They've done it again.

HOLMES Are you still looking for that missing boot?

HENRY Last night they took a brown one, today a black. Either that boot returns or the manager will cop an earful.

M'MER What do you make of it, Mr Holmes?

HOLMES It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data.

WATSON *(To OTHERS)* He has a lot of those sayings.

HOLMES Now Sir Henry, what are your plans?

HENRY To leave for Basketball Hall at the end of the week.

HOLMES A wise move. I know you are being dogged here in London. Did you know you were followed this morning from my house?

M'MER *(Angry)* Followed! By whom?
HOLMES Is there a man on Dartmoor with a black, full beard?
M'MER Barrymore, Sir Charles's butler has such a beard.
HOLMES But is he here in London?
M'MER I have no idea.
HOLMES Send a telegram to Mr Barrymore, Basketball Hall and a second to the Grimpen postmaster to be delivered by hand to the butler. That should let us know if Barrymore is at his post in Devonshire.
HENRY Thank you, Mr Holmes.
HOLMES Who is this man, Barrymore?
M'MEM The son of the old caretaker.
HOLMES Did Barrymore benefit by Sir Charles's will?
M'MEM He did. He and his wife scored a monkey a piece and to declare any possible conflict of interest, I picked up a grand.
HOLMES *(To WATSON)* That could be important, Watson. Two monkeys and a grand equals two big ones.
WATSON *(Has no idea)* But surely two big monkeys would be a gorilla. *(Ignored)*
HOLMES And the total value of his estate?
M'MEM It comes to about a million. *(OTHERS impressed)*
WATSON By jove.
HOLMES Tell me, Sir Henry, have your made your will?
HENRY No, Mr Holmes, but will do so as soon as possible.
HOLMES I agree you should go to Devonshire but with one condition. You must not go alone.
HENRY But Dr Mortimer returns with me.
HOLMES Ah, but he has his practice, lives miles away and is delightfully absent-minded. You must take a trusty man who will always be by your side.
HENRY *(Excited)* Oh Mr Holmes, how kind you are to volunteer your services.
HOLMES Not me. I have more clients than I can handle.
HENRY Then whom would you recommend?
HOLMES He stands beside you.
(The OTHERS look at WATSON. He turns around to see who HOLMES means then twigs)
WATSON Me? Seriously?
HENRY *(Pumping WATSON's hand)* Well that's real kind of you, Dr Watson. If you come down to Basketball Hall I'll never forget it.
WATSON *(Pleased)* My pleasure, Sir Charles. *(sic)*
HENRY Henry.
WATSON This sounds like a ripping adventure.
HOLMES I will require regular reports, Watson.
WATSON *(Suddenly serious)* Of course.
HOLMES Then shall we say Saturday next for the 10:30 from Paddington.
FX *Lights fade. The group bid farewell. HENRY and MORTIMER exit. Lights come up UR as HOLMES and WATSON enter sitting-room at 221b Baker Street*

Scene 7

HUDSON *(MRS HUDSON played by MRS BARRYMORE enters with telegram)* Telegram, Mr Holmes.
HOLMES Thank you, Mrs Hudson. *(She exits)*
WATSON What news?
HOLMES Barrymore is at Basketball Hall.
WATSON Which means what?
HOLMES The butler didn't do it.
HUDSON *(Enters)* Mr Holmes, there's a cab driver to see you. *(She exits)*
HOLMES Thank you, Mrs Hudson.
CABBIE *(Played by BARRYMORE sans beard enters annoyed)* I'm the cabbie what drives two seven oh four and I ain't never 'ad no complaint these past seven years. So I've come here to ask you to your face what you got against me.
HOLMES Nothing.
CABBIE I'm the perfect cabbie I am and … *(Shocked)* Nothing? Then why …
HOLMES But I have half a sovereign if you answer my questions.
CABBIE *(Now a changed man)* Oh, well, certainly sir, please, do fire away.
HOLMES Tell me all about the fare in your cab this morning who followed two gents who left through the door you knocked only two minutes ago.
CABBIE Well sir you seem to know as much as I do already. He said he was a detective and I was to say nothing about him to no-one.
HOLMES He said he was a detective?
CABBIE Yes sir.
HOLMES Is that all?
CABBIE When he left he told me his name.
HOLMES *(Cocky)* Oh he mentioned his name, did he? That was rather silly.
WATSON *(Super cocky)* Talk about a Nigel Bruce.
HOLMES And what was his name?
CABBIE As he was leaving he said, "It might interest you to know you have been driving Mr Sherlock Holmes".

BLACKOUT

FX *Steam locomotive whistle followed by crowd noises of a busy station.*
(In the Blackout, MORTIMER and HENRY enter with a chair each and sit side by side facing front. WATSON and HOLMES enter. WATSON places his chair beside the other two but stands with HOLMES beside him. HOLMES hands WATSON his case. They are on the platform with the other two in the carriage. LIGHTS up DC but with station noises continuing. If used, the electronic sign reads PADDINGTON)

Scene 8

HOLMES Remember, Watson, I wish you to report facts and leave me to do the thinking.
WATSON You don't wish me to use my superior intellect?
HOLMES You have arms? *(Confused, WATSON holds out his arms)*. Weapons man, your revolver.
WATSON *(Twigs, taps his side)* Oh yes, of course.
STATION *(Stage manager offstage, calling)* All aboard.

HOLMES *(Extends hand and he and WATSON shake hands)* It's an ugly, dangerous business, Watson, and I shall be very glad to have you back safe and sound in Baker Street.
(WATSON enters the compartment and sits beside his fellow travellers who greet him. Their bags are on the floor by their feet)

FX *Sound of locomotive starting. HOLMES walks backwards upstage as the train departs. He waves exiting into the darkness. Train travel sound continues*

HENRY I've travelled a good part of the world but nothing compares to my home county of Devonshire.

M'MER Have you ever been to Basketball Hall, Sir Henry?

HENRY Never, nor the moor which surrounds it.

M'MER *(Pointing)* Then look, there is your first sight.
WATSON and HENRY look out of window to study the moor.

FX *Train sounds change with locomotive slowing to eventually stop. If a burst of smoke/steam could burst onto the stage, that would give the front row something to smell.*

M'MER *(Stands holding bag)* This is our stop, gentlemen, a rarely used wayside halt.
WATSON and HENRY stand and hold a bag each. All three step out of the compartment. PERKINS, (LESTRADE) driver of wagonette, enters with large chair and whip, places his chair between two of the chairs with the third behind the high-backed chair. HENRY and MORTIMER are either side of the driver with WATSON almost hidden behind PERKINS.

FX *Locomotive sounds are of train departing. They fade as train is gone*

PERKINS *(Touching his cap and speaks to WATSON)* Welcome, Sir Henry.

M'MER That's Dr Watson.
(PERKINS touches cap to HENRY and puts bags upstage behind centre chair)

PERKINS Climb aboard, gentleman, if you please.
(They do with WATSON behind the new high-backed chair meaning he as good as can't be seen. MORTIMER and HENRY are on their chairs either side of and beside the driver. PERKINS "climbs" up onto his chair and gives the pony a gentle tap with his whip

PERKINS Walk on.

FX *A gentle clip clop as the wagonette as it heads to Basketball Hall*
MORTIMER and HENRY bounce slightly as the trap bounces along

M'MER The bracken and bramble look magnificent in the setting sun.

FX *Lighting immediately dims*

HENRY I love it all; the ferns, the trees and especially the noisy streams.

WATSON *(Peering around the side of the high-backed chair)* I say, I can't see a thing.

M'MER *(Pointing)* Look! Is that an armed soldier on horseback?

HENRY *(Turning to look)* What's he doing out here on the moor?

WATSON What soldier? *(Head pokes around other side of chair)* Where? *(Ignored – again)*

M'MER What's happening Perkins?

PERKINS *(Addresses men either side of him)* There's a convict escaped from the prison. Been out three days and there are armed men all over the moor.

HENRY What do the locals say?

WATSON Pardon? I can't hear you. *(Ignored)*

PERKINS There's a five pound reward for information but the money's worth nothing if your throat gets cut.

M'MET Who is the convict?

PERKINS It's Selden, the Notting Hill murderer. A brutal killer who some say is insane. You don't want to be on the moor now it's gone dark.

FX *Lights instantly dim to very low lighting and moaning wind sounds are heard*

WATSON I say, are we there yet?

PERKINS *(Pulls on reins and horse sounds stop)* Here we are, gentlemen, Basketball Court.

TRIO *(As one – correcting)* Hall!
(Lots of activity. A porch light comes on. If used, the electronic sign reads BASKETBALL HALL. BARRYMORE enters under porch light)

B'MORE Welcome, Sir Henry! Welcome to Basketball Hall!

PERKINS *(Mutters as he helps remove chairs)* Court.
(MRS BARRYMORE enters. HENRY and WATSON step out with their bag. MRS BARRYMORE helps PERKINS remove chairs)

M'MER *(He stands holding his bag)* If you don't mind, Sir Henry, I'll keep going. My wife is expecting me.

HENRY But surely you must stay for dinner.

M'MER No, I really should go. Patients await. But please, never hesitate, night or day, to send for me if I can be of service. *(To the driver)* Thank you, Perkins.

PERKINS Walk on.

FX *Clip clop of pony begins and fade*
(PERKINS picks up whip and skips/hops away into the night with MORTIMER following holding bag)

HENRY *(Introducing WATSON)* This is my friend and guest, Dr Watson

B'MORE *(Taking the bags)* Welcome, Dr Watson.

WATSON Just a minute. *(BARRYMORE stops)* I've seen that beard before. Is it real?

B'MORE It is, sir, grown here in Devonshire.

WATSON Have you a twin who lives in London and rides in hansom cabs along Baker Street on a Tuesday when the weather is fair to middling?

B'MORE No sir.

HENRY Remember Watson, Mr Holmes sent those telegrams.

WATSON Oh yes, by jove, you're absolutely right.

B'MORE And now gentlemen, allow me to show you to your rooms**.**
(BARRYMORE exits under porch light with OTHERS following. Porch light out. Lights up Centre as BARRYMORE re-enters leading OTHERS. He stops C)

B'MORE This'll be your room, Dr Watson.
(Places bag on floor)
This way, Sir Henry. *(BARRYMORE exits)*

HENRY Good night, Watson. *(HENRY follows BARRYMORE and they exit)*

WATSON Good night, Sir Henry.
(A solo overhead spot lights WATSON who looks around without much foot movement. He bends to his bag but stops when he hears something)
(Frightened whisper) What was that?

FX *A clock chimes and the moaning wind is heard. The wind FX continues.*
Not that, something else.
Woman sobbing/crying - it's MRS BARRYMORE offstage
(Dramatic voice) That sounds like a woman in distress. By jove, Holmes will ask about that. *(Looking for pencil and notepad)* The plot thickens.

BLACKOUT

Scene 9

(The moaning wind FX continues for a few seconds. WATSON takes his bag and exits. HENRY enters in BLACKOUT and places two chairs C. He sits. FX fades. Lights up as WATSON enters. He wears a cap and carries a cane/walking stick. It is the next morning and the men sit to mime eating breakfast)

HENRY Good morning, Watson. Did you sleep well?

WATSON No.

HENRY No?

WATSON Did you happen to hear a woman sobbing in the night?

HENRY I did but thought I was dreaming.

WATSON I heard it distinctly.

HENRY We must investigate. *(He mimes ringing bell)*

FX *Bell rings*

B'MORE *(Enters with tray)* You rang, Sir Henry?

HENRY Dr Watson and I heard a woman sobbing during the night. Did you?

B'MORE No sir. There are only two females in the Hall. The scullery maid in the other wing and my wife who always sleeps like a baby.
(HENRY and WATSON look at one another)
Shall I clear away, sir?

HENRY Yes. *(BARRYMORE mimes putting cups on his tray and departs)*

WATSON He could be lying. I still think his beard is suspicious.

HENRY Let's listen again tonight.

WATSON *(Standing)* Good oh. Well as you're busy with legal papers, I'll wander into the village and chat with the postmaster.

HENRY *(Standing)* Right you are but make sure you stay well clear of the moor.

WATSON Will do. Cheerio.
(Lights move from C to DL. HENRY exits with chairs. POSTMASTER played by PERKINS enters and stands behind imaginary counter. WATSON approaches)

FX *Shop bell tingles*

POSTM Good morning, sir.

WATSON Good morning. Last week I sent a telegram from London addressed to the butler Basketball at Barrymore Hall. *(sic)*

POSTM I remember it well, sir, and had the telegram delivered as directed.

WATSON Who delivered it?

POSTM My boy here. *(Indicates below imaginary desk. Talks to his imaginary son)* James, you delivered that telegram to Mr Basketball *(sic)* at the Hall last week, did you not?
(POSTMASTER plays his son using terrible ventriloquist skills)

JAMES *(High-pitched voice)* Yes, father, I delivered it.

WATSON Where is the lad? I can't see him.

POSTM He's very short, sir, oh and he's playing marbles.

WATSON But did he actually *see* Mr Barrymore?

POSTM James, did you see … *(Interrupts himself)*

JAMES No, father, I told you, he was in the loft.

WATSON Well if the lad didn't see the butler, how could he know the man received the telegram?

POSTM *(Annoyed)* Look 'ere, sir, my boy's word's as good as anyone's and, if there's a problem with the telegram, it's for Mr Basketball *(sic)* to complain.

WATSON Basketball? The man's name is Barrymore. Good day, sir.

(WATSON turns and heads across front of stage. Lights change covering front of whole stage. POSTMASTER (and his son) exit. WATSON ambles along waving his stick. He's about two-thirds the way across the stage when STAPLETON enters, calling. He carries a butterfly net and wears a boater)

STAPLE I say, Dr Watson! *(WATSON stops and turns to face STAPLETON who is puffing a little)* Do forgive my presumption, sir, but here on the moor we are homely folk and do not wait for formal introductions.

WATSON You're Stapleton the naturist. *(sic)* Dr Mortimer told me about you.

STAPLE I was at Dr Mortimer's house and he pointed you out to me. I thought I might introduce myself and enquire after Sir Henry's health.

WATSON He is very well, thank you.

STAPLE We were all afraid that after Sir Charles's death, Sir Henry might be reluctant to move here amongst the credulous peasants.

WATSON He arrived yesterday.

STAPLE Excellent. It's just that the legend of the hound continues to haunt his family.

WATSON You think some hound pursued Sir Charles and he died of fright?

STAPLE Have you a better explanation?

WATSON I have no explanation.

STAPLE What about Mr Sherlock Holmes? *(WATSON shocked)* Oh come now, Doctor, when Mortimer told me your name, it must follow your friend is interested in the matter.

WATSON I cannot discuss it.

STAPLE Well may I ask if he is to honour us with his presence?

WATSON He is busy in London.

STAPLE What a pity. *(Looking at WATSON)* I see you are intrigued by the moor.

WATSON *(Pointing out front)* What is that place?

STAPLE That is the Great Grimpen Mire. A false step there means death to man or beast. Only yesterday I saw a moor pony stumble into the bog, struggle and scream before being sucked to its death.

WATSON How terrible.

STAPLE I know the only two paths which allow me to traverse the mire and there are few who know it better than me. It means I can find rare plants and butterflies.

WATSON I shall try my luck some day.

STAPLE *(Aghast)* For God's sake, man, put such an idea out of your mind. There is not the least chance of your coming back alive.

FX *A long, low moan from a dull murmur to a deep roar and back to a murmur*

WATSON *(Stunned)* My God, what was that?

STAPLE The peasants say it is the Hound of the Basketballs calling for its prey.

WATSON Oh come now, you're an educated man. Surely you don't believe such nonsense.

STAPLE Bogs make queer noises, mud settles, water rises.

WATSON No, no, that was a living voice.

STAPLE Perhaps it was. You will find the moor a rather uncanny place. *(He sees something)* Do excuse me. I see a butterfly. *(He departs holding net)*

FX *Footsteps running offstage. WATSON turns*

BERYL *(Enters distressed, hurries to WATSON)* Go back! Go straight back to London, instantly.

WATSON *(Confused)* But why? I've only just arrived.

BERYL I cannot explain. *(Frantic whisper)* But for God's sake do what I ask. Go back and never set foot on the moor again.

WATSON Are you all right?

BERYL Man, can you not tell when a warning is for your own good? Go back to London. Start tonight. Get away from this place at all costs. *(STAPLETON enters. BERYL whispers)* Hush, my brother is coming.

STAPLE *(Puffing, calls)* Beryl! What are you doing here? *(He joins them)*

BERYL Jack, you look so hot.

STAPLE Chasing a rare butterfly and missed it. I see you have introduced yourselves.

BERYL Yes I was telling Sir Henry about the rare flowers on the moor.

BOTH Who?

BERYL *(Indicating WATSON)* Sir Henry Basketball.

WATSON No, no, madam. My name is Doctor John H. Watson.

BERYL *(Upset)* Oh dear, we've been talking at cross-purposes.

STAPLE But you had very little time to say anything.

WATSON Indeed. Now if you'll excuse me, I must away to Basketball Court.

BERYL Hall.

WATSON Sorry?

BERYL You said Basketball Court.

WATSON Did I by jove? *(Pointing)* Now is this the way.

STAPLE Straight on and turn left at those boulders.

WATSON *(Doffs hat)* Miss Stapleton.

(WATSON walks upstage turns and comes back DC. STAPLETON and BERYL exit only for BERYL, sans hat, to re-enter and run a lap of the stage timing it to that she is panting but waiting for WATSON who has made it back to DC. He is surprised)

WATSON *(Doffs hat)* Miss Stapleton.

BERYL *(Puffing)* I have run all the way to cut you off, Dr Watson. I had not time to even put on my hat. I can't stay or my brother may miss me. I wanted to say how sorry I am about my stupid mistake in thinking you were Sir Henry. Please forget everything I said.

WATSON But I can't forget, Miss Stapleton. Sir Henry is my friend and his welfare my close concern. Why are you so eager for Sir Henry to return to London?

BERYL It was a woman's whim, Dr Watson. I meant nothing.

WATSON No, no. I remember the thrill in your voice and the look in your eyes, and particularly your heaving bosom. *(Awkward pause)* Tell me why you spoke so and I promise to convey your warning to Sir Charles. *(sic)*

BERYL Henry.

WATSON Sorry?

BERYL You said Sir Charles. He's dead. It's his nephew, Henry we need to protect.

WATSON Of course but from what?

BERYL Do you know the story of the hound?

WATSON I do not believe in such nonsense.
BERYL But I do. If you have any influence with Sir Henry, take him away from this fatal place.
WATSON Then please, give me a reason.
BERYL I have no reason.
WATSON So why hide your words from your brother?
BERYL He wants the Hall to be occupied and would be angry if he knew I said anything which might induce Sir Henry to leave. I've said enough and must get back. Goodbye.
(She exits in a hurry leaving WATSON looking after her. **BLACKOUT***)*
FX *Bring up the previous moaning sound*

Scene 11

(Watson moves DR where a chair has been provided. He sits with a notepad and pencil. Single overhead light comes up. He is reading what he has written)
WATSON My Dear Holmes. Life drags on in this God-forsaken corner of the world. Once out upon the moor, you have left modern England behind. But its history is I'm sure of no interest to your severely practical mind.
One item of note concerns an escaped convict who remains at large. With Perkins the groom, we are four strong men here but the Stapletons, especially the beautiful Miss Stapleton, would be no match for the Notting Hill murderer.
We are to have luncheon with the siblings.
FX *Lights come up on opposite side of stage and STAPLETON, BERYL and HENRY enter and mime conversation. They behave according to the points made by WATSON*
WATSON *(Continues reading his letter to HOLMES)* Sir Henry took an immediate interest in Miss Stapleton and she in him. It would make a brilliant marriage but Stapleton seems demonstrably opposed to any such match.
If romance blossoms, I'll find it difficult to follow your orders of not allowing Sir Henry out on the moor alone. You know, two's company and Watson's a crowd.
(MORTIMER enters, joins the group and demonstrates WATSON's words)
WATSON *(Continues reading his letter to HOLMES)* Mortimer dropped in and showed us the Yew Alley where Sir Charles spent his final night. *(WATSON stands, keeps reading while becoming SIR CHARLES. He moves DC and a follow spot travels with him)*
WATSON He showed us the gate where Sir Charles smoked. *(Watson mimes puffing on cigar)* Mortimer gave us his belief that Sir Charles heard the hound.
FX *Dog howl*
Mysterious/spooky music begins with a crescendo
WATSON This terrified Sir Charles, *(WATSON's face shows terror)* causing him to run *(WATSON jogs on the spot facing front with his expression of fear)* even rising to run tippy-toe. *(WATSON runs on the spot on tippy-toe)*
WATSON *(Stops running)* Then, as the hound drew near, Sir Charles collapsed and died of fright.
(WATSON as SIR CHARLES collapses and dies. BERYL screams, The OTHERS rush to assist WATSON. They look at WATSON, face front and speak as one)
QUARTET By jove!
BLACKOUT
Cast exit, music continues then fades as house lights come up.

Scene 12

FX *(Wind on the moor plays for a few seconds then fades. WATSON is seated to one side with his notepad reading his latest missive to HOLMES. A single spot comes up as sound effects fade)*

WATSON My Dear Holmes, events here are crowding in thick and fast. My doubts about Barrymore remain. My room is close to that of the butler and the housekeeper. Remember I heard a woman moaning late one night, and Barrymore was emphatic it could not have been his wife. But things are strange.
(BARRYMORE enters holding a lighted candle – battery operated – and moves towards DC. He is lit only by the light he carries.)

WATSON At odd times during the night I hear a man's footsteps. I believe it to be Barrymore and wonder what he is doing.
(BARRYMORE peers out to the moor, then raises the candle and moves it back and forth then exits the way he came)

WATSON In the morning, I checked the window in our corridor and it's the only one with a view of the moor. Sir Henry and I plan to stay up and catch the man in the act.
The architect and decorators are regular visitors as Sir Henry plans to renovate the Hall. Soon, the only thing missing will be a wife and if I've read the tea leaves correctly, the Baronet has set his cap on Miss Stapleton, the sister of the naturist. *(sic)* I must say, Holmes, she's a bit of a cracker.
Lights come up on opposite side of stage as HENRY enters wearing hat

WATSON Yesterday Sir Henry appeared ready for a walk on the moor.
(WATSON stands and moves to HENRY)

HENRY Watson, I fancy a stroll before luncheon.

WATSON On the moor?

HENRY Why not?

WATSON I'll get my hat and join you.

HENRY Not necessary, old chap.

WATSON But Holmes insisted I should never leave you.

HENRY Ah, but Holmes did not anticipate a beautiful woman. I am sure you're not a spoil-sport. *(Pats WATSON's arm)* Wish me luck.
(HENRY turns and exits. Lights fade but remain on chair. WATSON resumes reading letter)

WATSON I'm not proud of what I did next, Holmes. Spying on a gentleman is never pleasant and when a lady is involved, I feel sick to my stomach. But I did your bidding.
(Light fades on WATSON and a new spot comes up DC. WATSON observes)

FX *Outdoor sounds, light wind, birds, babbling brook, etc – FX continues*
(Lights up DL where HENRY enters and moves DC. He has a cane)

WATSON *(Saying aloud what is in his letter to HOLMES)* I followed him, Holmes, but on the moor, he disappeared. *(Produces binoculars, stands on chair)* I climbed some rocks for a better view and spotted him. *(BERYL enters and the couple greet one another)* I should say them because the lovely Miss Stapleton arrived in what looked decidedly like an assignation.
(The couple, later trio, perform as per WATSON's instructions in exaggerated mime)
They were in deep conversation and she spoke earnestly making quick little movements with her hands. He shook his head in strong dissent. The couple stood facing each other, lost in admiration when suddenly someone else was on the moor.
(STAPLETON enters upstage with butterfly net and moves down to the couple)

Sir Henry drew Miss Stapleton to his side. His arm was around her but she strained to break free, her face averted. He stooped his head to hers, and she raised a hand as if in protest. Next moment they sprang apart and turned to face the on-rushing naturalist, this time fully dressed. Stapleton gesticulated and almost danced in front of the lovers. He abused Sir Henry who offered explanations which were rejected making Sir Henry as angry as the brother. Miss Stapleton maintained a haughty silence.
(STAPLETON and BERYL prepare to exit)

WATSON Finally, Stapleton gestured to his sister, turned on his heel and the pair of them departed leaving Sir Henry a dejected man. I hurried down from my lofty OP.
(WATSON moves to HENRY and real-time dialogue commences)

HENRY Hello, Watson. Where have you come from?

WATSON I regret to say, Sir Henry, I followed you.

HENRY And saw everything?

WATSON *(Pointing)* I was on that hill.

HENRY I believe the brother is crazy. Do you?

WATSON Perhaps he is a little odd.

HENRY He can't object to my worldly position so it must be my character. I've never hurt any man or woman and yet he won't allow me so much as to touch the tips of her fingers. I told her of my feelings and could see in her eyes she felt the same.

WATSON Did she speak of her feelings?

HENRY She said this was a place of danger and would never be happy until I left. I was about to propose marriage when her madman of a brother burst down upon us. Just tell me what it all means, Watson, and I'll owe you everything.

WATSON I fear any explanation will not satisfy you, Sir Henry. *(Indicates)* Come, let us return to the Hall and put this unhappy business behind us.
(They exit chatting)

HENRY He may not be crazy but that look in his eyes made me believe otherwise.
(As they exit, STAPLETON enters with BARRYMORE from the opposite direction)

B'MORE I'll inform Sir Henry you have arrived Mr Stapleton.
(STAPLETON nods, BARRYMORE exits)

HENRY *(Offstage, yells)* What? He's here? Now? *(Softer)* Is he armed?
(Pause, silence as STAPLETON looks nervous. HENRY enters with controlled anger)

STAPLE *(Contrite)* Sir Henry.

HENRY How dare you, sir.
(STAPLETON kneels which shocks SIR HENRY)

STAPLE I come to beg your forgiveness, Sir Henry.

HENRY *(Momentarily nonplussed)* What … er … Get up, man, get up.

STAPLE *(Stands still contrite)* My behaviour this morning was disgraceful and I can only hope my sincere apology and an explanation will go some little way to regaining your trust and friendship. Mea culpa, Sir Henry, mea maxima culpa.

HENRY Yes, well, thank you for your words. You mentioned an explanation.

STAPLE My sister is everything in my life. We've always been together and as I'm a very lonely man, Sir Henry, the thought of losing her was really terrible.

HENRY *(Nodding)* I see.

STAPLE I didn't know you were so attracted to Beryl and when I saw it with my own eyes, the shock was so great, I behaved in such a disgraceful way.

HENRY Do I take it you now have no objection to my relationship with your sister?
STAPLE None but if I may crave a favour. Could you please, for say the next three months, maintain a friendship and only then begin a courtship?
HENRY And you will have no objection after that time?
STAPLE None whatsoever.
HENRY *(Offers hand)* Then I am happy to agree.
STAPLE *(Shaking hands with relief)* I thank you, Sir Henry, from the bottom of my heart and look forward to our next meeting. Good day. *(STAPLETON heads off)*
HENRY Good day. *(Calls to departing visitor)* And please give my kind regards to your sister.
STAPLE *(Exiting)* I will indeed.
WATSON *(Enters)* I am intrigued, Sir Henry. What has happened?
HENRY The mystery is solved, Watson and all is well.
WATSON Then on to our next mystery about the woman sobbing in the night.
BLACKOUT
(The action continues without a break)

Scene 13

HENRY *(In the darkness)* That was quick. I can't see a thing.
WATSON That's the idea. Hush, I hear footsteps.
(BARRYMORE enters holding the battery-operated candle. He walks tippy-toe across the stage in front of the two men waiting in the darkness. BARRYMORE stops, faces front and waves the candle as he appears to signal towards the moor)
HENRY *(Whispers)* Now Watson, what is it you chaps say? The foot's the game.
WATSON *(Whispers)* That sounds familiar.
HENRY *(Whispers)* Come on.
(They creep towards BARRYMORE. He is unaware and keeps signalling. With a man either side and slightly upstage of BARRYMORE, HENRY comes alive. The moment he speaks, a spot lights the trio. BARRYMORE is shocked and reacts)
HENRY *(Fierce)* Barrymore! What are you doing here?
B'MORE *(Great shock)* Nothing, sir. *(The candle shakes)* It's the windows, sir. I go round at night to see they are fastened.
HENRY On the second floor?
B'MORE Yes, sir, all the windows.
HENRY Right, Barrymore, no more lies. What were you doing at that window?
B'MORE Don't ask me, Sir Henry. It's not my secret. If so I would tell you.
WATSON He must have been signalling someone. *(Takes candle)* Let us see if there is an answer.
(WATSON moves candle and all three stare at moor above audience)
(Excited and pointing) Yes, there it is!
B'MORE *(Panicking)* No, no, sir, it is nothing – nothing at all.
HENRY Move your light across the window, Watson. *(WATSON moves candle)* See, the other moves too. *(At the butler)* Now you rascal, who is your confederate and what is this conspiracy?
B'MORE *(Defiant)* It's none of your business, sir, and I will not tell.
HENRY Then you will leave my employment right away.
B'MORE Very good, sir. If I must I must.

HENRY And you go in disgrace. Your family has served mine for over a century and here you are in some dark plot against me.
(MRS BARRYMORE enters with shawl over her night attire)
MRS B No, no, sir, not against you.
B'MORE We have to go, Eliza. This is the end. You can pack our things.
MRS B *(To her husband and not the other John)* Oh John, John, have I brought you to this?
WATSON *(Confused)* To what, brought me to what?
(This confuses everyone. It seems they almost step out of character)
MRS B I'm sorry?
WATSON You said my name and asked why I brought you to this.
MRS B I meant my husband, sir, John Barrymore.
WATSON Oh I do beg your pardon, please, continue. *(She does and turns to HENRY)*
MRS B It is all my doing, Sir Henry. My husband has done nothing except for my sake.
HENRY But what does it mean?
MRS B My unhappy brother is starving on the moor. We cannot let him perish. The light is our signal to him that food is ready and his light tells us where to take it.
HENRY Then your brother is …
MRS B Selden, the criminal and escaped convict.
WATSON By jove.
B'MORE It's true, sir. There was never a plot against you.
MRS B My maiden name is Selden, sir. I remember my curly-haired little brother who tragically fell in with the wrong crowd and committed those terrible crimes. He knew we were here at the Hall and so escaped hoping we would help him. It's all my doing, sir. I couldn't refuse to help a starving man.
HENRY Is this true, Barrymore?
B'MORE Yes, Sir Henry, every word of it.
HENRY Well I cannot blame you for standing by your wife. Forget what I have said. Go to your room, both of you, and we'll talk in the morning.
B'MORE *(Nods)* Thank you, Sir Henry.
MRS B *(Gives bob)* Good night, gentlemen.
(They exit. The men mime opening the window and stare at the moor)
HENRY How far away is his candle?
WATSON Not far, not even a mile.
HENRY *(Makes decision)* By thunder, Watson, I am going to take that man.
WATSON I will come too.
HENRY Then get your revolver and let's catch a convict.
BLACKOUT
(They exit and move upstage ready to enter almost immediately)

Scene 14

FX *Eerie sounds of the wind with light rain. This continues.*
A soft light comes up, moonlight with a filter. The two men, wearing head gear and perhaps a coat or jacket, enter upstage and walk slowly forward. They zig-zag as they climb over imaginary rocks and step carefully on a narrow path. They peer through the darkness.

WATSON We must take him by surprise before he can resist.
HENRY I say, Watson, what would Holmes say to this?
FX *A drawn out howl as heard before by WATSON and STAPLETON*
Both men freeze
HENRY Good heavens, what was that?
WATSON I don't know but I've heard it before.
FX *Sound fades leaving just the wind and light rain*
HENRY *(Afraid)* Watson, that was the cry of a hound. What do the locals call it?
WATSON Oh forget them; they're ignorant people.
HENRY *(Insistent)* I insist. What do they say?
WATSON *(Reluctant)* It is the cry of the Hound of the Basketballs.
HENRY It *was* a hound. *(Pointing)* And it came from over there. Isn't that the Grimpen Mire?
WATSON Yes, it is.
HENRY Come now, Watson, tell me the truth. Was that the cry of a hound?
WATSON *(Still hesitant)* Yes, yes it was.
HENRY *(Slight panic)* My God, is the legend true? Am I in danger?
WATSON No, of course not.
HENRY We laughed about it in London but not now, here on the moor and with that howl . Is that what killed my uncle? Remember the footprint beside his body. Oh Watson, my blood runs cold. *(Holds out hand)* Here, hold my hand.
WATSON Really? Is that necessary?
HENRY Perhaps not but what should we do?
WATSON Shall we turn back?
HENRY *(Change of heart)* No, by thunder. We are after the convict. Come on!
(They creep/climb forward till they are close to the front of the performing area. A small single spot lights them. They freeze)
HENRY *(Whispers)* What now?
WATSON *(Whispers, points)* There's his light. He must be near. Let's find him.
(They take a step forward but freeze. BLACKOUT. They scream and move upstage a short distance. SELDEN played by PERKINS or BARRYMORE in disguise enters facing upstage. With face unseen by the audience, he raises a weapon above his head and throws it at the cowering couple. It is a basketball which misses the men and bounces across the stage to be collected in the wings in the darkness. SELDEN exits. The men try and recover. WATSON looks to where SELDEN appeared. He points in shock)
WATSON Look!
HENRY *(Recovers)* What? What did you see?
WATSON A man.
HENRY Selden?
WATSON No, a tall, thin man. My God, for a moment I thought it was …
HENRY Who?
WATSON It must have been a warder from the prison. Come, we must report to the officials at Princetown.
HENRY Watson, I'm scared.
BLACKOUT
FX *Increase the FX of wind and rain*
(They exit upstage)

Scene 15

(PERKINS as POSTMASTER enters DL in his imaginary shop. LIGHTS up on this corner)

FX *Shop bell tinkles as customer enters. It is HOLMES*

POSTM Good morning, sir.

HOLMES Good morning.

POSTM How can I help?

HOLMES You have been sending mail to a Mr Sherlock Holmes in London, have you not?

POSTM I have, sir.

HOLMES In future I require you to hold any letters which I will collect in person.

POSTM And you are?

HOLMES *(Handing coin to PM)* Here's a new crown for your trouble and to say nothing about me or this conversation.

POSTM Of course, sir, but you do know your scribe is about to enter.
(WATSON walks across opposite side heading into the light)

HOLMES *(Panics)* What? *(PM points, HOLMES turns, thinks then runs behind imaginary counter)* I mustn't be seen. *(Moves behind PM)*

FX *Shop bell tinkles*
(HOLMES removes his deerstalker and puts it on PM's head. He adjusts it. All this happens just as WATSON enters)

WATSON Good morning.

POSTM Good morning, sir.

WATSON *(Offers envelope)* I have another letter for … *(Sees hat)* I say, where did you get that hat?

POSTM Hat, sir? What hat would that be?

WATSON The one on your head, man.

POSTM Oh that one. I always wear it on a Monday, sir.

WATSON But today's Tuesday.

POSTM *(Opens arms in gesture)* What can I say? Tempus fugit. *(WATSON speechless)* That'll be a penny, sir.

WATSON *(Searching for coin)* How's your boy, James?

POSTM He's fine, sir. Thank you for asking.

WATSON *(Hands over coin)* Still playing marbles?
(Goes to move behind imaginary counter. PM panics)

POSTM Ah, not today, sir. He's working on a tricky shot. *(WATSON stopped. PM addresses his invisible son)* Say hello to the gentleman, James. *(Pathetic ventriloquism as JAMES)* Good morning, sir.
(HOLMES pokes his head out trying to follow the pantomime)

WATSON I'd like some cigarettes, please. *(Points to imaginary shelf behind PM)* Those will do.
(They are behind and above the PM. He shuffles upstage with HOLMES mimicking his movements shuffling behind him. PM doesn't want to turn around so reaches without looking)

POSTM These sir?

WATSON No, the next ones. *(PM reaches for another imaginary pack)* No, on the other side.
(HOLMES has had enough. He mimes taking the correct pack and hands them to the PM who mimes handing them to WATSON)

POSTM That'll be sixpence, sir. *(WATSON mimes handing over a coin)*
WATSON And please make sure that letter gets away today.
POSTM It will be in the addressee's hands before you can say Bertram Fletcher Robinson.
WATSON *(Freezes)* Who did you say?
POSTM *(Flustered)* Ah … *(Becomes little JACK resuming terrible ventriloquist routine)*
JACK Dad?
POSTM Yes son.
JACK When will you take me to the pantomime?
POSTM Soon, son.
JACK I want to call out, …
TRIO *(Calls a la panto-goer)* "He's behind you!"
BLACKOUT *Actors exit in darkness. House lights resume.*

End of Act 1

ACT 2

Scene 1

(Lights come up DR with WATSON sitting reading his latest letter to HOLMES)
WATSON My dear Holmes, Sir Henry is despondent after our latest trip to the moor. The legend weighs heavily on his mind. We both heard the baying of a hound. On the night we went hunting for Selden the convict, I glimpsed a tall man on a hill in the moonlight. Could he be the fellow we saw in the Baker Street cab? Has he now moved to Devonshire? Things seem ever more dangerous and I wish you were here with me.
(Raised voices are heard as HENRY and BARRYMORE enter DL and are lit)
HENRY *(Entering)* The matter is over, man, over.
B'MORE *(Following HENRY)* But Sir Henry, if I could explain.
HENRY *(Calling)* Watson! Are you there man?
WATSON *(Stands, crosses to HENRY)* I am indeed, sir.
HENRY Barrymore thinks it was unfair of us to hunt for his brother-in-law.
B'MORE *(Humble)* I was in shock when I heard the news, Sir Henry, and spoke out of turn.
HENRY The man is a public danger. Look at Stapleton's house with no-one but himself to defend it.
B'MORE Selden will break into no house, sir. In three days he'll be on his way to South America. I beg you not to tell the police he is still on the moor.
HENRY Watson?
WATSON *(Shrugs)* If he were out of the country, it would relieve the taxpayer of a burden.
HENRY *(Thinks, decides)* Okay, Barrymore I'll say nothing.
B'MORE *(Much relieved)* God bless you, sir, and thank you from my heart!
HENRY All right, you can go.
B'MORE Thank you, sir. *(He starts to exit, stops and returns)* Sir, there is something else. It concerns Sir Charles's death.
HENRY *(Anxious)* What about it? Do you know how he died?
B'MORE No, sir, but I know why he was at the gate. *(Pause)* It was to meet a woman.

HENRY *(Shocked)* To meet a woman?
WATSON *(Shocked)* A female woman?
HENRY Do you know her name?
B'MORE No but her initials are L L.
WATSON Lily Langtry!
B'MORE And she came from the nearby village of Coombe Tracey.
HENRY How do you know this?
B'MORE I remember a letter for Sir Charles written in a woman's hand and marked Coombe Tracey. Weeks later, after Sir Charles's death, my wife found the remains of a burnt letter in the grate in his study. Only a small part of the letter was legible, a postscript.
HENRY And what did it say?
B'MORE "Please, please, as you are a gentleman, burn this letter and be at the gate by ten o'clock."
HENRY And the signature?
B'MORE No signature just the initials L L. Perhaps if you found this woman, sir, you might learn more about Sir Charles's death.
HENRY Why on Earth did you conceal this vital information?
B'MORE Well, sir, the inquest was over, my wife's brother turned up causing all sorts of grief, and besides, I didn't wish to harm …
WATSON Your employer's reputation.
B'MORE *(Nodding)* Exactly, sir.
HENRY *(Pause, thinking)* Very good, Barrymore. You can go.
(BARRYMORE nods and exits)
Well, Watson, what should we do?
WATSON Tell Holmes about this at once. I would not be surprised if it brings him down. I'll write a letter immediately.
HENRY Does he reply to you? I mean, are you sure your correspondence reaches London?
WATSON I've never been more sure of anything in my life. I'll set off first thing in the morning. Goodnight, Sir Henry.
HENRY Goodnight, Watson.
BLACKOUT

Scene 2

(Lights up next morning on the moor. MORTIMER enters looking for his lost dog)
MORT *(Calling)* Here boy. *(Whistles)* Come on. Here boy.
WATSON *(Enters returning from walk)* Dr Mortimer, good morning.
MORT Dr Watson, good morning to you.
WATSON What brings you out on the moor?
MORT I've lost my dog.
WATSON Oh no.
MORT He wandered off and has disappeared.
WATSON I'm sure he'll come home. I'll keep an eye out for him.
MORT Thank you, you're most kind.

WATSON Tell me, Doctor, being a local, do you happen to know of a woman in these parts with the initials L L?
MORT There is a Laura Lyons who lives in Coombe Tracey.
WATSON Do you know if she was acquainted with Sir Charles?
MORT She was. Sir Charles helped Mrs Lyons, his generosity being typical of the man. *(Pause)* Why do you ask?
WATSON *(Doesn't want to tell the truth)* Oh, I suffer from a condition known as idle curiosity.
MORT *(Confused)* Perhaps you need to get out more, Dr Watson.
WATSON You're absolutely right. I wish I had a hobby like yours, craniology. *(Leads him off)*
MORT *(Excited as the exit)* Oh yes, the study of skulls is something I adore. I do hope Sherlock Holmes will leave his head to history. *(They exit)*
(LIGHTS fade where they exit and come up on the other side of the stage. BARRYMORE enters. When he speaks, WATSON, sans hat and walking stick, re-enters and crosses to the butler. On the opposite side of the stage in the darkness, LAURA – played by BERYL - enters with two chairs and sits)
B'MORE You wanted to see me, Dr Watson.
WATSON *(Moving to BARRYMORE)* Yes I did. Has our convict departed the moor?
B'MORE I don't know, sir. The food I left three days ago has gone.
WATSON Then he was certainly there then?
B'MORE Unless it was the other man who took it.
WATSON *(Shocked)* The other man? What other man? Have you seen him?
B'MORE *I* haven't but Selden has. He told me the stranger is in hiding but is not a convict.
WATSON And?
B'MORE Selden took the stranger to be a gentleman who lives in one of the ancient stone huts and has a boy bring him food from Coombe Tracey.
WATSON I see. Thank you, Barrymore.
B'MORE Thank you, sir. *(Nod of the head and he exits)*

Scene 3

(Lights fade on WATSON and come up on LAURA. WATSON crosses stage, with hat and cane, reaches LAURA'S house and taps his cane on the floor)
LAURA *(Rises)* Come in, sir.
WATSON Good day, Mrs Lyons. I am Dr Watson. *(Invited to sit, does so when LAURA sits)*
LAURA What can I do for you, sir?
WATSON I am making enquiries about the late Sir Charles Basketball.
LAURA *(Defensive)* What can I tell you about him?
WATSON You knew him, did you not?
LAURA The gentleman took a keen interest in my wellbeing.
WATSON Did you correspond with him?
LAURA *(Angry)* What is the object of these questions?
WATSON To avoid a scandal. It is better that I should ask them here, in private, than to have the matter pass beyond our control.
LAURA *(Pauses, deep breathing)* Very well.
WATSON Did you correspond with Sir Charles?

LAURA I did, once or twice, to thank him for his generosity.
WATSON How did Sir Charles know of your situation?
LAURA A neighbour, Mr Stapleton, an intimate friend of Sir Charles was the go-between.
WATSON Did you ever write to Sir Charles asking him to meet you?
LAURA *(Angry)* Really, sir, that is a very extraordinary question.
WATSON I think you did and on the very day of Sir Charles's death. *(She is shocked)* Do you remember writing, "Please, please, as you are a gentleman, burn this letter, and be at the gate by ten o'clock"?
LAURA *(Distressed but recovers)* Is there no such thing as a gentleman?
WATSON Sir Charles *did* burn your letter but a fragment remained.
LAURA *(Confesses)* Yes, I did write it. I wished him to help me.
WATSON But why a meeting at such an hour?
LAURA I heard he was leaving for London the next day and could be away for months.
WATSON What happened when you got there?
LAURA I never went.
WATSON *(Shocked*) What? Why?
LAURA It's a private matter. I don't wish to discuss it.
WATSON Do you wish to help clear up the mystery of Sir Charles's death?
LAURA *(Comes clean)* Oh very well. I made a rash marriage and have suffered greatly. My brute of a husband has made my life hell. I learnt I could gain my freedom if certain expenses were met. I thought if I could explain my situation to Sir Charles face to face, he would help me.
WATSON Then why not keep the planned meeting?
LAURA Because I received help from someone else. *(Pause)* I was about to write to Sir Charles and explain things when I saw his death notice in the newspaper.
WATSON *(Stands)* Thank you for your honesty, madam. I bid you good-day.
(WATSON exits walking back across the stage. Lights down on LAURA who exits with chairs. Lights up on the top of the rostrum UC where FRANKLAND stands with his telescope on a tripod)

Scene 4

FRANK *(Sees WATSON approaching)* Good-day, Dr Watson. Do you remember me?
WATSON Mr Frankland is it not?
FRANK Indeed so.
WATSON You are the scourge of the village taking anyone and everyone to court on the most trivial of matters.
FRANK Why, thank you for your kind words. Will you join me in a glass of wine?
WATSON Sadly no, as Sir Henry is expecting me back at the Hall.
FRANK I may have some interesting news for you, sir.
WATSON Oh?
FRANK Through my trusty telescope I have spied someone upon the moor.
WATSON Some poacher no doubt.
FRANK Ha, ha, someone far more important. How about the escaped convict?
WATSON *(Excited)* You've seen him?

FRANK Not exactly but I have seen the messenger who takes him his food.
WATSON *(Mutters)* Barrymore.
FRANK It's a child.
WATSON *(Shocked)* A child!
FRANK I have seen the boy again and again with his bundle and … *(Stops and points out front)* Look, there's something moving out there now. *(He looks through telescope)* Yes! Quick, Dr Watson, quick.
WATSON *(WATSON climbs steps to use telescope)* Yes, I see him. *(Steps back)* Darn, he's gone.
FRANK The convict is just over that hill where the child disappeared. *(Wags finger)* I hate the police, Dr Watson, and I demand, sir, you tell them not one word. Do you understand?
WATSON Just as you wish. But now it is growing dark. *(LIGHTS dim)* and I must return to Basketball Hall.
FRANK Safe journey, Dr Watson, and stay away from the moor especially as it's getting darker. *(LIGHTS dim further)*
(FRANKLAND takes his telescope and exits. WATSON moves slowly downstage and stops C)
BLACKOUT

Scene 5

(Single spot picks out WATSON who moves slowly DC but is climbing over rocks and speaking to himself)
WATSON *(As he climbs)* That child was not delivering food for Selden but to the stranger. *(Stops and looks)* That must be the stone hut in which he lives.
(Moves forward slowly forward and takes hold of the imaginary cloth door. He withdraws his revolver, pauses, then whips back the cloth. Seeing the hut empty, he steps inside and looks around. Replaces revolver)
Here's the food the boy delivered and what's this? *(Picks up imaginary scrap of paper)* A note in a child's handwriting. "Dr. Watson has gone to Castle Coombe". *(Shocked)* The child is spying on *me!*
FX *Footsteps on gravel – soft with a crescendo. HOLMES enters and walks towards WATSON*
WATSON *(WATSON hears them. Whispers)* It's the stranger. *(Draws revolver and prepares to fire)*
FX *Footsteps stop*
HOLMES *(Pause)* It is a lovely evening, my dear Watson. I really think you will be more comfortable outside than in.
(WATSON's face spotlight as shock dominates his dial. Mouths) Holmes!
BLACKOUT

Scene 6

(Soft night lighting comes up. WATSON realises, turns and yells)
WATSON Holmes! Holmes!
HOLMES Come out and please be careful with that revolver.
(Watson pockets his pistol, exits the imaginary hut and the two men shake hands enthusiastically)
WATSON I never was more glad to see anyone in my life.
HOLMES Or more astonished. *(They laugh)*

WATSON I knew there was a stranger on the moor but had no clue to his identity.
HOLMES Really? I was sure you saw me the other night silhouetted against the moon.
WATSON *(Shocked)* That was you!
HOLMES It was indeed but tell me, what of your latest news?
WATSON I have been to Coombe Tracey to visit a Mrs Laura Lyons.
HOLMES Well done! United we'll crack the case my dear fellow. *(WATSON purring then switches)*
WATSON But how in the name of wonder did you come here? I thought you were in London working on that blackmail case.
HOLMES That was what I wished you to think.
WATSON *(Angry)* Then you use me, and yet do not trust me. It's the same old story. Watson, the inspiration for Nigel Bruce, the good-for-nothing scribbler, thick as a Dartmoor doorstop.
HOLMES My dear fellow, you are always invaluable to me and I beg that you will forgive me if I have seemed to play a trick on you.
WATSON Then why keep me in the dark?
HOLMES Because separately we could better tackle the case than together as a team.
WATSON *(Miffed)* Then my reports have all been wasted!
HOLMES No, no, no. *(Produces letters)* I have read them all many times, and must compliment you on your zeal and intelligence. *(WATSON relaxes a little)* There now, where's that Watsonian smile?
WATSON *(Gives weak, begrudging smile)* So what happens now?
HOLMES I need the notes from your meeting with Mrs Lyons. Did you know she has a special relationship with the man Stapleton?
WATSON *(Surprised)* I knew no such thing.
HOLMES They meet, they write and have a complete understanding, and all I need do now is detach Stapleton from his wife.
WATSON *(Stunned)* His wife!
HOLMES The woman you believe to be Miss Stapleton is Mrs Stapleton, his wife.
WATSON Good heavens, Holmes. Sir Henry has fallen in love with a married woman.
HOLMES And all allowed to happen by our butterfly-chasing friend, Stapleton.
WATSON Then it is he who is our enemy. It is he who dogged us in London.
HOLMES That is how I read the riddle.
WATSON And when she mistook me for Sir Henry and begged me to flee back to London means she knew of Stapleton's plans.
HOLMES Exactly.
WATSON But how do you know the woman is his wife? And whatever you say, please, do not start with, "It's elementary my dear Watson".
HOLMES Research, Watson. He revealed he once had a school in the north of England. There are records which enabled me to track him down. Now, I think it is time we returned to your host at the Hall.
WATSON You're coming too?
HOLMES Of course.
WATSON I have one last question, Holmes. What is the meaning of it all? What is he after?

HOLMES It is murder, Watson – refined, cold-blooded, deliberate murder. In the meantime, you must guard your charge as would a mother her ailing child. Sir Henry is in mortal danger.

FX *A terrifying scream, blood-curdling cry rings out over the moor.*

WATSON Oh my God! What was that?

HOLMES *(Straining to hear, whispers)* Hush!

FX *Another terrifying scream*

WATSON *(Pointing in wrong direction)* It came from over there.

HOLMES *(Pointing in opposite direction)* No, there!

FX *Howl of the Hound*

HOLMES The hound! Come, Watson, and pray we are not too late.

FX *Chase music*

(HOLMES leads the run with WATSON struggling to follow. They could do a complete lap of the stage with perhaps going up and down the small platform UC. This represents their climbing as they cross the moor. They could even exit, move upstage in the wings and re-enter upstage.
During this pantomime, BARRYMORE as SELDEN enters DL and lies still face down. The runners finish about C and are on the edge of a small hill. FX music stops. They stand still)

FX *One brief, final scream*

HOLMES He has beaten us, Watson. We are too late.

WATSON *(Distressed)* No, no, surely not!

HOLMES Can you see anything?

WATSON Nothing.

B'MORE *Low moan*

HOLMES But hark, what is that?
(They move a short distance to the body. HOLMES kneels and examines the body)

WATSON Is he dead? *(HOLMES nods)* That tweed suit, *(BARRYMORE has changed)* it's the one Sir Henry wore on that first morning when we met in Baker Street.

HOLMES *(Groans, slumps in despair)* Oh no.

WATSON The brute! Oh, Holmes, I shall never forgive myself for having left him to his fate.

HOLMES I am more to blame than you, Watson. I have thrown away the life of my client. It is the greatest blow to my career and possibly the end of Sherlock Holmes.

WATSON But where is this brute of a hound which drove him to his death? And Stapleton, where is he? He shall answer for this deed.

HOLMES He shall. I will see to that.

WATSON We must get help, Holmes. We can't carry the body all the way back to the Hall.
(HOLMES bends to again examine the body and seemingly goes mad. He stands and starts dancing, hopping from one foot to the other, clapping his hands)

HOLMES A beard! A beard! The man has a beard!

WATSON *(Stunned)* A beard?

HOLMES *(Stops celebrating and points)* It is not Sir Henry but my neighbour the convict.

WATSON Of course. Sir Henry gave his suit to Barrymore to give to Selden the convict.

HOLMES The clothes have been the poor fellow's death; the stolen boot in London and now the suit have given the hound Sir Henry's scent. But why let the hound loose tonight?
(STAPLETON enters)

WATSON Someone's coming.
STAPLE Dr Watson, is that you? *(Sees body)* But dear me, what's this? Don't tell me it's our friend, Sir Henry. *(He bends to examine body and is thrown, stutters)* Who is this?
WATSON It is Selden the escaped convict.
STAPLE Dear me! How did he die?
WATSON We think he fell and broke his neck. We heard a cry.
STAPLE I heard it too. I had invited Sir Henry to call and I feared it might be him. By the way, did you hear anything else beside a cry?
HOLMES No, did you?
STAPLE No.
HOLMES Then why ask?
STAPLE Oh the peasants talk about a hound on the moor. Did you hear anything like a hound?
WATSON We heard nothing of the kind.
STAPLE What do you think about all this, Mr Sherlock Holmes?
HOLMES You are quick at identification.
STAPLE We have been expecting you ever since Dr Watson arrived. You are in time to witness a tragedy.
HOLMES Indeed and will take an unpleasant remembrance back to London tomorrow.
STAPLE Oh, leaving so soon?
HOLMES Indeed and sadly an investigator needs facts, and not legends or rumours. It has not been a satisfactory case.
STAPLE I would suggest we carry this poor fellow to my house, but it would give my sister a fright. Perhaps if we place some rocks over the body, he will be safe until morning.
HOLMES We can do that.
STAPLE Then I'll bid you goodnight, gentlemen.
(STAPLETON turns and exits)
WATSON I am sorry he has seen you.
(The detectives move from the body. BARRYMORE subtly exits)
HOLMES So am I.
WATSON Will he change his plans?
HOLMES He may become more cautious or more desperate. But I too have a plan. Now, let us go to the Hall. Oh, and Watson, breathe not a word of tonight to Sir Henry.
WATSON But Mrs Barrymore must be told.
HOLMES Of course. *(They set off)*
WATSON You do know Sir Henry and I are dining with the Stapletons tomorrow.
HOLMES Then you must excuse yourself and have Sir Henry travel alone and walk back across the moor.
WATSON *(Shocked)* Alone? On the moor? But isn't that dangerous?
HOLMES Of course it is, Watson, but essential for a gripping finale.
BLACKOUT
(They exit and SIR HENRY enters followed by the BARRYMORES. LIGHTS up on the trio. The married couple are nervous worried about Selden)

SCENE 7

HENRY *(Serious)* Mrs Barrymore, I'm so sorry to tell you your brother tripped and fell on the moor and has died.
MRS B *(Wails her grief. BARRYMORE comforts her as she uses her apron to cover her sobbing)*
HENRY If it's any consolation, I believe his death was instant and your brother did not suffer. *(More grief from the sister)*
B'MORE *(Guiding his wife offstage)* Thank you, Sir Henry.
(The BARRYMORES exit and HOLMES and WATSON enter from the darkness)
HENRY Mr Holmes, I am so pleased to see you.
HOLMES I don't suppose you appreciate that we have been mourning over you as having broken your neck.
HENRY Me?
HOLMES Selden was dressed in your tweed suit.
HENRY Of course, I gave it to Barrymore for his brother-in-law. But what of the case?
HOLMES I think we can solve it if you will give me your help.
HENRY Whatever you tell me to do, Mr Holmes, I will do.
HOLMES But I will ask you to do so blindly, without asking the reason.
HENRY Just as you like.
(HOLMES stops talking and stares at the wall. The OTHERS look where he looks)
WATSON Holmes, what have you seen?
HOLMES That line of portraits. *(The OTHERS turn to look. The portraits are imaginary on the nearest imaginary wall)* Family portraits I presume?
HENRY Every one.
HOLMES Do you know their names?
HENRY The gentleman with the telescope is Rear-Admiral Basketball.
HOLMES And who is the cavalier with the black velvet and lace?
HENRY That is the wicked Hugo Basketball, the one responsible for the legend of the Hound.
HOLMES I expected a ruffian but he seems a quiet, meek-mannered man.
HENRY Gentlemen, I'll leave you to explore at will but I must retire. Good-night.
GUESTS Good-night, Sir Henry. *(He exits)*
HOLMES *(To the Hugo portrait)* So Watson, does Sir Hugo remind you of anyone?
WATSON There is something of Sir Henry about the jaw.
HOLMES *(Moves to portrait and holds a hand to it)* But what if I cover the hat and his long ringlets?
WATSON *(Shocked)* Good heavens! It's Stapleton!
HOLMES The fellow is a Basketball – that is evident.
WATSON With designs upon the succession.
HOLMES Exactly. *(Excited)* We have him, Watson, and tomorrow we add him to the Baker Street collection!
BLACKOUT

Scene 8

(Lights up next morning. HOLMES and WATSON perhaps swap positions. HENRY enters)

HENRY Good morning, Holmes. You look like a general planning a battle with his chief of staff.
HOLMES Indeed and even Watson is asking for orders.
HENRY As do I.
HOLMES I understand you are to dine with the Stapletons tonight.
HENRY And I hope that you will both come with me.
HOLMES Sadly not as Watson and I must return to London.
HENRY *(Disappointed)* To London?
WATSON Only for a day or two.
HENRY But I hoped you were going to see me through this business.
HOLMES My dear fellow, you must trust me explicitly and do exactly as I say. Please tell your friends we are sorry to have missed them and we'll return to Devonshire very soon. Will you give them that message?
HENRY If you insist.
WATSON He does.
HENRY When will you go?
HOLMES Now.
HENRY I've a good mind to come with you. Why should I stay here alone?
HOLMES Because you gave me your word you would do as you were told.
HENRY All right then, I'll stay.
WATSON Good man.
HOLMES I have one more direction. After your meal with the Stapletons, you are to walk back to the Hall alone.
HENRY *(Astounded)* Across the moor? Alone?
HOLMES Yes.
HENRY But that's the one thing you told me never to do.
WATSON He's changed his mind.
HOLMES It is essential you do so and I have every confidence in your nerve and courage.
HENRY Then I will do it.
WATSON Stout fellow.
HOLMES Now we must away back to London. Good-day, Sir Henry.
(LIGHTS fade DR and come up DC. HENRY waves and exits. HOLMES and WATSON move C. LAURA enters with two chairs DL and sits on one in darkness)

Scene 9

HOLMES Now, Watson, we are to meet a man from Scotland Yard off the London train.
WATSON Inspector Lestrade?
HOLMES I sent him a telegram and he arrives in time for the arrest.
WATSON But if we leave now, how can we work with Lestrade?
HOLMES We're not taking the train
WATSON *(Confused)* We're walking to London? Holmes, it's a long way to …
HOLMES We're off to Coombe Tracey to meet Mrs Laura Lyons.
(He sets off with WATSON struggling to keep up)
(LIGHTS fade C and come up DL. HOLMES and WATSON enter)
LAURA Good-day, gentlemen.

HOLMES *(Sits as does LAURA. WATSON stands)* I am investigating the death of Sir Charles Basketball. My friend, Dr Watson, told me what you wrote to Sir Charles and what you withheld.

LAURA *(Defiant)* What have I withheld?

HOLMES Why did you ask Sir Charles to meet you by the gate near Basketball Hall at 10 o'clock? That was when and where he died. What is the connection between those events?

LAURA There is no connection.

HOLMES Mrs Lyons, we regard Sir Charles's death as murder, and that the evidence may implicate not only your friend, Mr Stapleton, but also *(Pause)* his wife.

LAURA *(Springs from chair)* His wife!

HOLMES The woman he claims as his sister is really his wife.

LAURA *(Resumes seat, upset)* His wife! He is not a married man.

WATSON Oh yes he is.

LAURA Oh no he's not.

WATSON Oh yes he is.

HOLMES Watson, please. *(Produces photo which she accepts)* Here is a photograph of the couple taken four years ago. He used another name but on the back it states Mr and Mrs. *(Produces letters which she studies briefly)* And here are letters from people who worked for Stapleton and his wife.
(She hands them back to WATSON who puts them in a pocket)

LAURA Mr Holmes, this man offered me marriage on condition I obtained a divorce from my husband. Stapleton, or whatever his name is, has lied to me throughout. Ask me what you like.

HOLMES Did Stapleton suggest you write to Sir Charles?

LAURA He dictated the letter.

HOLMES And it was to seek financial help for the legal expenses of your divorce?

LAURA Exactly.

HOLMES And after you sent the letter, Stapleton dissuaded you from keeping the appointment and made you swear to say nothing about your appointment with Sir Charles?

LAURA He did.

HOLMES *(Stands)* You have had a fortunate escape, madam. We wish you good morning, Mrs Lyons, and you will very shortly hear from us again.
(LIGHTS fade DL and come up DC. LAURA exits leaving chairs. HOLMES and WATSON move DC)

FX *Steam train arriving*

HOLMES Now, Watson, Lestrade is about to arrive. *(LESTRADE enters carrying a chair)* Ah, Inspector.

LESTRA Mr Holmes. *(He shakes hands with both men)* Dr Watson.

HOLMES We have the biggest case for years.

LESTRA Good show.

HOLMES Gentlemen, we need a cab.
(WATSON collects two chairs from LAURA meeting, LESTRADE has a BYO chair. As before with the wagonette trip, all three chairs face front with WATSON on the chair behind the high-backed chair. PERKINS, playing another cabbie, enters with a whip and high-backed chair placing it DC between two of the three chairs. HOLMES and LESTRADE sit on these while WATSON is at the back and hidden behind the driver's seat)

FX *Clip clop of horse*
(LIGHTS change to night as the cab ventures towards STAPLETON's house)

Scene 10

HOLMES *(Whispers)* Good trip down, Lestrade?
LESTRA *(Whispers)* Yes, thank you, but why are we whispering?
HOLMES *(Whispers and points)* We don't know the driver.
LESTRA *(Nods and whispers)* Oh, okay, got it.
WATSON *(Normal voice)* I say, why you whispering?
TRIO *(Even the driver)* Shhhh! *(With a finger in front of mouth)*
WATSON *(Miserable)* I only asked.
DRIVER *(DRIVER pulls on reins)* Whoa there.
FX *Horse sounds stop*
HOLMES *(Stands and places chair aside)* From here, gentlemen, we walk.
(PERKINS takes his big chair and exits, WATSON and LESTRADE place their chair aside. The TRIO meet DC)
HOLMES Are you armed, Lestrade?
LESTRA As long as I have trousers, I have something in my pocket.
WATSON *(Aside)* Where is Frankie Howard when you need him?
HOLMES My friend and I are also ready for emergencies.
LESTRA So what's the game?
HOLMES A waiting game. *(Points)* That's the Stapleton house. From now on we proceed on tip toe and speak in a whisper.
FX A few bars from *Cat Like Tread* from *The Pirates of Penzance*.
(All three about turn and, on tip toe in a choreographed routine, walk upstage in time to the music. At about C, they about turn and return to where they started, all on tip toe)
FX *Music stops*
WATSON By jove, Holmes, I love going on adventures with you.
LESTRA Reminds me of my days in the police chorus.
HOLMES *(Serious)* Watson, you know the lie of the land. Creep forward silently, and see what they're doing. But for Heaven's sake don't let them know they're being watched.
(WATSON tip toes DL, peers into the gloom then tip toes back to the OTHERS)
WATSON Sir Henry and Stapleton are dining alone.
HOLMES Where's his wife?
WATSON No idea.
FX *Smoke machine begins to send the Grimpen Mire fog towards the trio*
HOLMES The fog is moving towards us.
LESTRA Is that serious?
HOLMES Very serious – it's the one thing which could discombobulate my plans. *(Checks watch)* He can't be long now.
LESTRA Who's he?
HOLMES Sir Henry Basketball.
WATSON At least the moon gives us a little light.
(Soft lights wash the stage)
LESTRA But the fog's getting worse.

FX *(Increase fog machine output)*

HOLMES If he isn't here in a quarter of an hour the path will be covered. In half an hour we won't be able to see our hands in front of us.

WATSON Shall we move to higher ground?

HOLMES Yes, let's move.

(TRIO creep upstage and position themselves on the steps either side of the small rostrum. HOLMES is on top, flat level and the OTHERS on either side on the steps)

LESTRA I have the arrest warrant, Mr Holmes.

HOLMES Hist! I think I hear him coming.

FX *Add footsteps on gravel or similar*

(HENRY enters and crosses from DL to UC. He is a worried man and stops every few steps to look behind him. He stops in front of the TRIO. They stare at him but he doesn't see them. The FX fade as he walks upstage and disappears)

FX *Scary music or sound effects*

HOLMES *(Produces revolver)* Look out! It's coming!

(This is the climax of the play. In the novel, there is a final chapter set in the sitting-room at 221B Baker Street. That chapter is not used in this stage version. That final book chapter is an explanation of the loose ends. To finish with a dramatic conclusion, we have the flight of the hound, the saving of HENRY and the death of STAPLETON.

How is the hound presented? One suggestion is through madcap activities from the TRIO and a lively light show. The hound is imaginary but with the TRIO tackling it and the many moving lights, the effect should work. Here comes Rover)

FX *Scary sounds and/or music continues and enters a crescendo.*

(Dancing follow spots criss-cross the stage. One could even shine into the auditorium although not into the eyes of the audience. The actions and words of the TRIO overlap)

LESTRA *(In his haste to attack, he falls over and complains)* Ow, my ankle. Help me! Help!

WATSON *(Can't get his gun out)* My revolver! It's stuck. Help me! Help!

(HOLMES, the hero, withdraws his revolver and lets off a shot. WATSON does the same only it goes off in the air knocking the good doctor off balance)

HOLMES He's getting away! Come on! *(HOLMES races UR, stops, points DL)* This way. *(He and WATSON hurry through the fog and moving lights and stop DL)* There!

(HOLMES fires five shots. Kill the FX and busy lights. WATSON looks over the edge of the stage. LESTRADE stumbles down and stands beside WATSON also looking over the edge)

WATSON What a terrifying beast.

LESTRA Is it dead?

HOLMES Never more so.

WATSON That looks like phosphorus.

HOLMES A cunning disguise.

(HENRY enters, staggers and slumps to the ground)

LESTRA *(Sees HENRY)* There's your man.

(TRIO hurry to HENRY)

WATSON *(Examining HENRY)* He's not injured.

HENRY *(Desperate)* You have saved my life.

HOLMES Having first endangered it.

HENRY What do you propose to do?

HOLMES Leave you here to rest. Help him. *(WATSON and LESTRA help HENRY upstage where he sits on the steps)* We have our case and now we only want our man. We shall return.

BLACKOUT

Scene 11

(Lights up DR as TRIO are outside STAPLETON'S home. BERYL is under black cloth, seated on chair, wearing a gag, her hands pretending to be tied behind her back)

HOLMES It's a thousand to one against our finding Stapleton at home. But we'll search the house and make sure. This way. *(They enter imaginary house)*

WATSON *(Looking around)* There's no-one here.

LESTRA Let's try upstairs.

(As one, TRIO run on the spot and stop as one)

WATSON *(Tries imaginary door)* This door is locked.

HOLMES Stand back! *(He aims kick at door)*

FX *(Door being forcibly opened)*

(They surround BERYL. LESTRADE pulls back black cloth revealing BERYL)

WATSON *(Horrified)* Miss Stapleton! *(He assists her remove imaginary rope on her wrists)*

HOLMES It's *Missus* Stapleton.

BERYL *(She removes gag. Gasping, recovering from her ordeal)* Is he safe? Has he escaped?

HOLMES He can never escape us, madam

BERYL No, no, not my husband. Is Sir Henry safe?

WATSON Yes.

BERYL And the hound?

HOLMES It is dead.

BERYL *(Much relieved)* Thank God! Thank God! Oh the villain! See how he has treated me. *(She indicates her situation)* But this is nothing. It is my mind and soul he has tortured and defiled. I have been his dupe and his tool. *(She sobs)*

HOLMES You bear him no good will, madam. Tell us where we can find him and so atone for any support you may have given to his evil plans.

BERYL There is an old tin mine in the heart of the Grimpen Mire where he kept his hound. That is where he would fly.

HOLMES But no-one could find their way into the Grimpen Mire tonight.

BERYL *(Hoping he's trapped)* He may find his way in, but never out.

WATSON We can come back in the morning, Holmes.

HOLMES Some would suggest that but I want this mystery solved tonight. Lestrade, can you remain and protect this lady?

LESTRA Of course.

WATSON I'd be happy to help Lestrade; to give aid and succour I mean.

HOLMES No, Watson, you have led this investigation and must be there at the death. Come.

(HOLMES and WATSON step outside the room, run on the spot to go downstairs then step outside. LIGHTS fade on BERYL and LESTRADE who exit. LIGHTS up DC as the duo enter the moor. They peer into the distance)

FX *Fog machine sends fog their way*

WATSON Holmes, it's dangerous. I've seen and heard ponies fall into this mire and die a horrible death.

HOLMES Well don't fall in then. *(Sees imaginary boot)* What's that?

WATSON It looks like one of Sir Henry's boots. Be careful Holmes.

(HOLMES steps off the path to collect the boot and sinks in the mire. This could be achieved by falling on his knees and crying out. He holds out his hands to WATSON who struggles to save his friend)

WATSON Holmes! Can you swim? *(Takes outstretched hands)*

HOLMES Pull harder, Watson. *(HOLMES is saved)*

WATSON Enough, Holmes. Stapleton is dead, the hound is dead and you have saved the day – again. That is what I shall write in my chronicle of *The Hound of the Basketballs*.

HOLMES *(Announcing)* But we must acknowledge the others.

Finale

FX *(Music begins possibly using previous G and S melody. Time the music so that it ends once the full company has taken their bow)*
(Thus begins the Curtain Calls. HOLMES and WATSON become the announcers. When a character's name is called, they move into a spot DR, take their bow and then move C)

HOLMES *(Indicating DR)* Mr and Mrs Barrymore.
(The couple enter, bow then move C out of the spotlight)

WATSON *(Indicating DR)* Dr Mortimer. *(He enters DR, bows, then moves C out of the spotlight)*

HOLMES Sir Henry Basketball. *(He enters DR, bows, then moves C out of the spotlight)*

WATSON Mr Sinister Stapleton *(Enters, bows, then moves C out of the spotlight)*
(Consider a Music Hall routine of booing Mr Evil with WATSON leading the booing)

HOLMES *(Indicating DR)* Inspector Lestrade.
(He enters, bows then moves C out of the spotlight)

WATSON Mrs Stapleton.
(She enters, bows then moves C out of the spotlight)

HOLMES *(Indicating DR)* Dr John H. Watson.
(He moves DC, bows and remains there before indicating his friend)

WATSON Mr Sherlock Holmes.
(Takes his bow DC after which the cast move forward with actors in a line with HOLMES and WATSON in the centre)

The End

Some More Sherlockian Plays by Cenarth Fox

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"This drama is an utter delight, a very poignant script and performance" **Sherlock Classic Specialties USA**

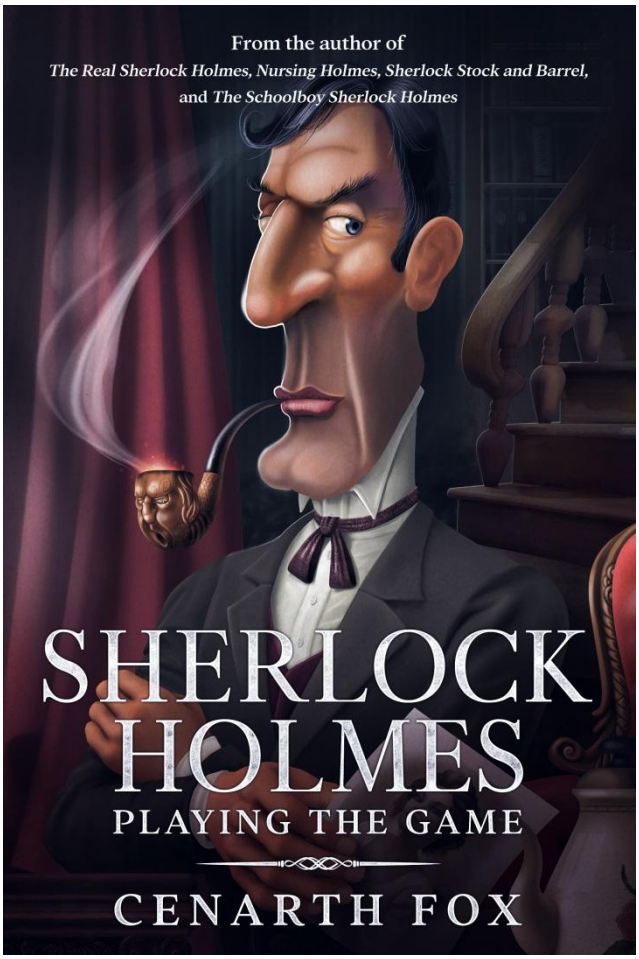
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Sir Arthur (David Small), Mary "the Ma'am" Doyle (Louise Whitehead) and Mr Sherlock Holmes (Kirk Alexander)

Sherlockian Books

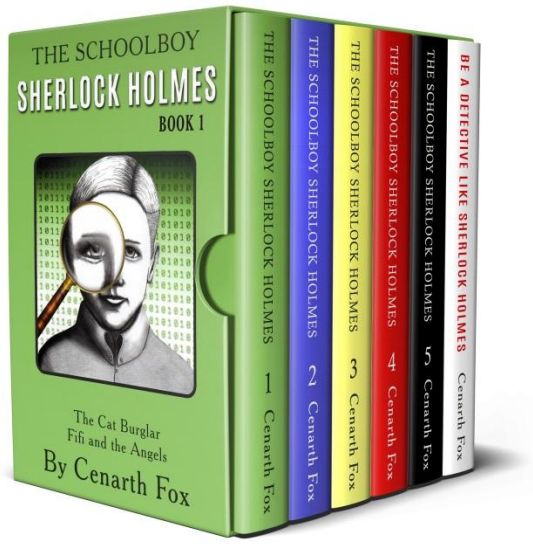


The great man is soon to retire. On his last night at Baker Street, the loyal landlady drops a bombshell. Holmes is staggered. Mrs Hudson has done what!? Sherlock Holmes never panics - until now. Doctor Watson arrives and is stunned. It's their greatest challenge. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is furious. A famous author turned counter-intelligence spy is on the case. The Strand Magazine smells a scoop. Inspector Lestrade from Scotland Yard plans revenge, and at stake is the brilliant reputation of the world's most famous consulting detective. His only hope is to 'play the game'.

Cenarth Fox's *Sherlock Holmes: Playing the Game* is a delightfully imaginative pastiche and recommended. **Peter E. Blau** BSI Bethesda, MD

An extraordinary book, one of the most enjoyable pieces of Holmesian fiction I've read in a long time! This is a complex, ingenious and deliciously funny story of intersecting realities, and the conclusion is entirely satisfactory. I love it! **Roger Johnson**, Commissioning Editor: *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*

Cenarth Fox is one of our most knowledgeable writers on the life and works of Conan Doyle's 'Sherlock Holmes', having written 5 Schoolboy Sherlock Holmes novels, four stage plays and a novel about the creator and the character. **John Gunn** Melbourne Theatre



Nicholas Twit, 11, lives in Melbourne today and is nuts about Sherlock Holmes. Nick's bedroom is a replica of the sitting room at 221B Baker Street. He even has a sign on his door. When the couple next door, Mr and Mrs Basket, start a detective agency called *Basket Case Investigations*, Nick is their sleuth. He teams up with Felicity, 14, to become Holmes and Watson. It's Nick 'n Flick. They solve mysteries using the methods of Mr Holmes. As well as the mysteries, there are puzzles, Twit-speak, Sherlockian snippets and word games. These books are a great way to introduce young readers to classic detective fiction. One of the stories has been used in a text book to teach English to thousands of French students. There's even a bonus book on how to be a detective – all the equipment you'll need, how Sherlock Holmes solved mysteries, how to crack codes and much more.

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