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Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's

The Hound of the Baskervilles

Adapted by David Pichette
and R. Hamilton Wright

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES was first produced by the Seattle Repertory Theatre (Jerry Manning, Artistic Director; Benjamin Moore, Managing Director), premiering at the Bagley Wright Theatre on November 15, 2013. The performance was directed by Allison Narver, with sets, lights, and projections by L.B. Morse, costumes by Deborah Trout, and sound design and composition by Paul James Prendergast. The Production Stage Manager was Michael B. Paul and the Assistant Stage Manager was Jessica C. Bomball. The cast was as follows:

BARRYMORE	Rob Burgess
STAPLETON	Quinn Franzen
MORTIMER	Basil Harris
HOLMES	Darragh Kennan
BERYL	Hana Lass
SIR CHARLES/FRANKLAND	Charles Leggett
WATSON	Andrew McGinn
MRS. HUDSON/MRS. BARRYMORE	Marianne Owen
SIR HENRY	Connor Toms

CHARACTERS

SIR CHARLES BASKERVILLE

BARRYMORE

MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES

DR. JOHN WATSON

JAMES MORTIMER

SIR HENRY BASKERVILLE

MRS. BARRYMORE

MR. FRANKLAND

JACK STAPLETON

BERYL STAPLETON

Note: A number of characters, including **SIR CHARLES BASKERVILLE**, **PERKINS**, **THE TICKET SELLER** and **OTHERS**, may be played by one actor. **MRS. HUDSON** may be played by the actress playing **MRS. BARRYMORE**. Given this breakdown, the play can be performed by ten actors.

SETTING

London and Devonshire

TIME

Autumn, 1890

AUTHORS' NOTE

In the original production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Allison Narver and her marvelous design team used a creative mix of moving scenic pieces, wonderfully evocative projections, lights and original music to tell this story in a way that allowed it to keep moving forward in space. When we spin a yarn like this, with so many locales, we need to think creatively, ask the audience to be our partners and at all costs - keep it moving.

For Jerry Manning

OVERTURE

(Music builds as the curtain rises and we see a man, his great-coat wrapped around him, a cigar in one hand, standing stock-still, looking out over the bleak stretch of Dartmoor just beneath the gardens at Baskerville Hall, Devonshire. This is SIR CHARLES BASKERVILLE. It is late at night. SIR CHARLES stares out on the moor as if waiting for someone – or something – to appear. Then another man appears, having come down from the Hall. He carries a lantern. This is BARRYMORE, the butler.)

BARRYMORE. Pardon me, m'lord.

SIR CHARLES. Good God, man, don't creep up on me like that!

BARRYMORE. I do beg your pardon, Sir Charles. I thought perhaps I'd bring out a lantern, it being so dark.

SIR CHARLES. There's no need, Barrymore. I grew up on these grounds.

BARRYMORE. Yes, sir. But there's no moon, and –

SIR CHARLES. That's enough, Barrymore. Go back to the house.

BARRYMORE. But, Sir Charles, it's been some time since you've been out –

SIR CHARLES. Don't cluck, man, I'll be fine. Go back to the house. Finish the packing for tomorrow's trip to London.

BARRYMORE. Yes, sir. As you wish, sir.

(BARRYMORE walks up towards the house and disappears in the gloom. SIR CHARLES hears something.)

SIR CHARLES. Are you there? You needn't be frightened.

(Then he hears something else – a distant, but distinct Howl.)

It isn't possible.

(Again the hound is heard, this time closer and more like a beast that is on the scent of its prey.)

Just a story to frighten naughty children. Nanny used it on me. Kept me up at night.

(The howl is closer now and closing fast.)

Just a moor dog! Chasing hares. Nothing else.

(Then he hears the Hound closer, growling. Then he sees it. He screams.)

No! God No!

(He runs screaming and the sound of the dog is mixed with his screams. The curtain comes in and once down, a projection of a spectral Hound from Hell rushes towards the audience with a snap of its jaws! Blackout.)

ACT ONE

Scene One

(The curtain rises to reveal the rooms at 221b Baker Street. SHERLOCK HOLMES is sitting with his back to DR. JOHN WATSON, who is sitting at their breakfast table, trying to read the newspaper. HOLMES is very still, staring out the window. MRS. HUDSON, their housekeeper, enters with a fresh pot of coffee, which she places on the table.)

MRS. HUDSON. I've brought more coffee, Mr. Holmes.

(HOLMES gives no indication that he has heard her.)

Will there be anything else? *(no answer)* I am preparing a nice rarebit for tea. Would you prefer the fresh mustard? *(nothing)* Will you be going out this evening? *(same)* Her Majesty the Queen is downstairs; shall I tell her to come back tomorrow? *(same)*

(She and WATSON share a moment.)

WATSON. Thank you, Mrs. Hudson.

(She picks up the cold coffee pot and exits the room.)

(Long moment. Finally HOLMES stands up and crosses to his desk, where he opens a drawer and takes out two glass vials, examines them both closely, then puts one in his dressing gown pocket and the other back in the drawer. He then takes out a leather-bound syringe case and walks towards the door to his room.)

Which is it today, Holmes? Morphine or cocaine?

HOLMES. It is a seven percent solution of cocaine. Would you care to try it?

WATSON. No indeed, I would not.

(WATSON stands and moves towards the window.)

It's taken me years to recover my constitution after my wounds in Afghanistan. I have no interest in throwing extra strain upon it for no good reason.

HOLMES. I suppose its influence is physically a bad one.

I find it, however, so transcendently stimulating and clarifying to the mind that its secondary action is a matter of small amount.

WATSON. But count the cost, man! Why should you, for a mere passing pleasure, risk the loss of those great powers with which you have been endowed?

HOLMES. My mind rebels at stagnation, Watson. Give me problems, give me work! Give me the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can then dispense with artificial stimulants. But Good God, Watson, look at what currently passes for crime in London:

(He picks up the newspaper.)

A dockworker strangles his wife, apparently because she burnt his toast. A jeweler is robbed. The jewels are then sold to a pawnbroker – around the corner from the jeweler's shop. These criminal masterminds are then arrested in a pub across the street from the pawnbrokers. A minister of Parliament is found dead in the arms of a prostitute. Dear God, if I had a half-a-crown every time that's occurred I'd – !

(HOLMES takes a folded letter from his pocket.)

But all is not lost: My services are passionately requested by one of the great families of the Kingdom. The Duchess of Bedford and her household are in turmoil – She has lost her prized Pekinese and tells me in her crabbed, cursive hand that money is no object should I discover the whereabouts of her beloved Nanky-Poo!

(He crumples up the letter.)

"How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of the world. Fie on it!"

(He tosses the ball of paper at the fireplace.)

(to WATSON) Byron?

WATSON. Shakespeare! Really, Holmes, how can you need to ask? A child of ten would know that.

HOLMES. Perhaps. But a child of ten would be incapable of identifying 47 varieties of cigar ash at a glance, partly because his brain is cluttered up with such useless information.

(He takes the vial of cocaine solution from his pocket.)

No, there is nothing of interest for me, Watson, and I do abhor the dull routine of existence.

(He starts out again. WATSON is desperate to keep his friend from making what he considers a terrible mistake.)

WATSON. Holmes!

HOLMES. I'm sorry, Watson.

WATSON. Holmes, there seems to be a man loitering outside our door. He may be up to something.

(Almost against his better judgement, HOLMES crosses to the window.)

You see?

HOLMES. The man in the Raglan-sleeved overcoat?

WATSON. Yes. What do you make of him?

HOLMES. He's overdressed.

WATSON. It does seem like a heavy coat for this weather.

HOLMES. But not for the weather whence he came.

WATSON. What do you mean?

HOLMES. A man of about thirty-five. Not a Londoner. A medical man, like yourself. Practices in the country. The Westcountry. In Devon...or possibly Dorset. No, Devon. In fact he spends a good deal of his time on Dartmoor. He's not married. He's possibly an antiquarian. Has a dog. Most likely a spaniel. Yes, in fact it is a flat-coated Sussex spaniel.

WATSON. My dear Holmes, how on earth can you know these things?

HOLMES. For God's sake, Watson, it is so obvious.

WATSON. Well, I admit his bag does seem to label him a doctor.

HOLMES. You think? But look closer. There's a luggage tag on the bag. He's been on the train recently. The smear of red clay on the instep of his boots is a signal indication that he has been in front of Paddington Station, where Craven street is being excavated – that red clay is unique to the neighborhood. The Great Western Railway which empties Cornwall, Devon and Dorset, serves Paddington; his cap is of a type favored by Devonshire farmers; his coat, so out of season in London, but very useful if he lives in or near Dartmoor, where the autumn has been frightfully cold, is stained a chalky-grey along the bottom of the hem, which occurs when the coat gets wet in the rain and then comes in contact with the native limestone of Dartmoor, leaching the mineral into the wool. His status as a bachelor is testified to by the state of his trousers, which are unpressed and stained. A dockworker's wife might let it go, but not a doctor's. His dog is also present on his trousers, coat and hat.

WATSON. But how can you possibly know it's a flat-coated Sussex spaniel?

HOLMES. Because he's tied the dog to the lamppost down the street.

(Their downstairs bell rings.)

And there he is, Watson.

(He puts the syringe case back in the desk.)

We'll need more coffee. *(looks in the pot)* Ah.

(HOLMES takes off his dressing gown and puts on his coat.)

Now is the dramatic moment of fate, Watson, when you hear a step upon the stair which is walking into

your life, and you know not whether for good or ill. What does this stranger, this Doctor from Devon, ask of Sherlock Holmes, the specialist in crime?

(There is a knock at the door.)

(sotto voce) I love this. Come in!

(The door opens and the young man as described by HOLMES enters.)

Welcome, Doctor...

MORTIMER. Mortimer. Dr. James Mortimer, Mr. Holmes. I presume that it is Mr. Sherlock Holmes I am addressing and not –

HOLMES. No, this is my colleague Dr. Watson.

MORTIMER. Of course, Dr. Watson. You interest me very much Mr. Holmes. I had hardly expected so dolichocephalic a skull or such well-marked supra-orbital development. Would you have any objection to my running my finger along your parietal fissure?

(HOLMES offers his head for examination. MORTIMER does so with great care.)

A cast of your skull, sir, would be an ornament to any anthropological museum, until, of course, the original is available.

HOLMES. You're an enthusiast in your line of thought, I perceive, sir, as I am in mine. Won't you sit down?

(MORTIMER does so.)

WATSON. Tell me, Dr. Mortimer, do you have your practice in Devon?

MORTIMER. Yes, I do. But how you know that –

HOLMES. You live on Dartmoor?

MORTIMER. Yes. On the very edge of it. But this is marvelous, gentlemen.

WATSON. Isn't it lonely there for your wife?

MORTIMER. Oh, I'm not married, no, I'm Chief Medical Officer for the area. Our little village is called Grimpen.

HOLMES. Grimpen? Grimpen. Grimpen...

(HOLMES takes down his clipping file and starts looking through it.)

MORTIMER. Yes. G,R,I, –

HOLMES. I presume, sir, that it was not merely for the purpose of examining my skull that you have done me the honour to call here today?

MORTIMER. Oh, no, sir.

HOLMES. Then how may I be of assistance?

MORTIMER. Mr. Holmes, I have in my pocket a manuscript.

HOLMES. Early eighteenth century, unless it is a forgery.

(HOLMES and WATSON look to each other.)

HOLMES/WATSON. Antiquarian.

MORTIMER. I'm sorry?

HOLMES. Your manuscript.

MORTIMER. But how did you arrive at that date, sir?

HOLMES. You have presented an inch or two to my examination since your arrival. It would be a poor expert who could not give the date of a document within a decade or so.

(He finds the clipping.) Ah, Grimpen! *(re: the document)* I put your document at 1730.

MORTIMER. Amazing! The exact date is 1742.

HOLMES. Ah, well. *(looking at the clipping)* And now perhaps you'll be so good as to tell me what connection there is between this antique document and the recent tragic death of Sir Charles Baskerville.

(MORTIMER leaps to his feet.)

MORTIMER. Good God, Mr. Holmes, how on earth do you know –

HOLMES. "Our little village is called Grimpen". That rang a bell that took me to my clipping file. I am a collector like yourself, Doctor, but I collect suspicious deaths and lurid crimes. And here I have it.

(He gives the clipping to WATSON.)

From the *Devon County Chronicle* of June 14th.

WATSON. "Tragedy at Baskerville Hall"

HOLMES. Second headline.

WATSON. "Sir Charles Baskerville Found Dead."

HOLMES. Now, Dr. Mortimer, was Sir Charles Baskerville's death a suspicious one?

MORTIMER. Well, it was –

WATSON. It says here the coroner's inquest found Sir Charles died of heart failure.

HOLMES. Is that correct?

MORTIMER. Yes, that is true.

WATSON. Listen to this, Holmes – "Sir Charles' footprints indicate that in the moments before his death he was walking on tiptoes. 'It's as if he was creeping up on something,' says Chief Constable Fenton"

HOLMES. Ah. That's intriguing, isn't it?

(MRS. HUDSON enters with a letter.)

MORTIMER. Yes, but –

MRS. HUDSON. Pardon me, Mr. Holmes.

HOLMES. Yes, Mrs. Hudson?

MRS. HUDSON. A letter for you – specially delivered.

HOLMES. By whom?

MRS. HUDSON. A young man, sir. 24 or 25, I should think. 5 foot 7, brown eyes, sandy hair, between 10 and 11 stone, soft hands, slight squint, a manner both condescending and obsequious suggesting his position as a servant to one of the great houses. More coffee?

HOLMES. Mrs. Hudson, you surprise me.

MRS. HUDSON. One picks up things, over time.

(HOLMES reads the letter.)

MORTIMER. Now, Mr. Holmes –

(Their bell rings downstairs.)

HOLMES. Another visitor?

MORTIMER. Oh, dear.

HOLMES. Are you expecting someone, Doctor Mortimer?

MORTIMER. No, well...not yet.

HOLMES. Who?

(The door flies open and a strapping YOUNG MAN, his clothes disordered and covered in dirt, barrels into the room. His face is flushed with anger.)

SIR HENRY. That goddammed son-of-a-bitch!

MORTIMER. Sir Henry!

(The YOUNG MAN sees MRS. HUDSON.)

SIR HENRY. Oh, I do beg your pardon, ma'am. I didn't know a lady was here. I got a bit carried away.

MRS. HUDSON. Think nothing of it, sir. *(looking at HOLMES)*

I have endured far worse behavior, I assure you.

MORTIMER. My God, Sir Henry, what's happened to you?

SIR HENRY. I was almost trampled to death by a runaway freight wagon out on Oxford Street!

WATSON. Are you all right?

SIR HENRY. I'm fine, thank you.

MORTIMER. But why are you here, Sir Henry? I thought that we had agreed that I would –

SIR HENRY. I'm sorry, Mortimer, but I've about had it with that hotel.

MORTIMER. But Sir Henry, as the executor of your uncle's estate, I have the –

SIR HENRY. Besides they stole my damned boots and then they gave 'em back and then they stole 'em again!

HOLMES. Mrs. Hudson, might you have a few minutes to brush Sir Henry's coat?

MRS. HUDSON. Of course, Mr. Holmes. May I, sir?

SIR HENRY. Oh, yes. Thanks very much...I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name.

(He offers her his hand.)

MRS. HUDSON. Hudson...Mrs.

SIR HENRY. My name's Baskerville, Mrs. Hudson. Hank Baskerville.

MRS. HUDSON. (*taking his hand*) Mrs. ...Edith Hudson.

HOLMES/WATSON. Edith!?

MRS. HUDSON. Did you think I had no Christian name, gentlemen?

WATSON. Of course you do.

HOLMES. I never thought to ask.

MRS. HUDSON. (*to HENRY*) I'll have this cleaned up for you in a jiffy, sir.

SIR HENRY. Thank you, ma'am.

(**MRS. HUDSON** *exits with the coat.*)

HOLMES. Sir Henry, my name is Sherlock Holmes.

SIR HENRY. I'm sorry for bustin' in on you like this, Mr. Holmes, but London's got me up on my hind legs a little.

HOLMES. Yes, the traffic here is frightful. May I introduce my colleague, Dr. John Watson.

SIR HENRY. Nice to meet you, Dr. Watson, Hank Baskerville.

WATSON. Hank?

SIR HENRY. That's right.

MORTIMER. Now, Sir Henry.

SIR HENRY. Well, I'm sorry, but I've been known as Hank Baskerville all my life. If you asked anyone back home if they knew Sir Henry Baskerville, they'd scratch their heads.

HOLMES. You were born in Canada, Sir Henry?

SIR HENRY. That's right, Mr. Holmes.

HOLMES. Province of Alberta. Nearer Edmonton than Calgary, I should think. You've spent a good portion of your life on horseback, and though not a military man, you've grown accustomed to issuing orders and seeing them carried out. Your left leg was broken when you were young – probably falling off a horse. You are an only child. You are not married and your horse is a dappled, grey...gelding.

SIR HENRY. Good Lord, Mr. Holmes, how in creation did you –

HOLMES. The shape of the wear on the hem of your coat. The hair on your coat. The callous on your right hand. The way you hold yourself. The shape of your legs. The scars on your fists. The lack of them on your face. Your father's watch, chain, fob, and ring. And something about your accent.

WATSON. Won't you sit down, Sir Henry?

SIR HENRY. Thank you. Well Mortimer, have you told these gentlemen about the family curse yet?

MORTIMER. Now, Henry, it is hardly a curse.

HOLMES. You are the heir to the Baskerville estate?

SIR HENRY. Yep. Six weeks ago I was drivin' 2500 head of cattle from Red Deer down to Calgary. Now I'm Lord of Baskerville Hall.

HOLMES. (*to MORTIMER*) There is no other claimant?

MORTIMER. No. Sir Charles had no children. Philip had only one child –

SIR HENRY. Me.

MORTIMER. – and Rodger, the youngest of the three Baskerville brothers –

SIR HENRY. – the black sheep –

MORTIMER. – emigrated to South America and died there, in 1876, of yellow fever. Henry is the last of the Baskervilles.

SIR HENRY. The Last of the Baskervilles – sounds like a dime novel.

HOLMES. But if something should happen to our young friend here – you will forgive the unpleasant hypothesis, Sir Henry – who would inherit the estate?

MORTIMER. If Sir Henry should die childless, then the estate would descend to the Desmonds, who are distant cousins. Elliot Desmond is an elderly clergyman in a village somewhere in Cornwall, I think.

HOLMES. Have you met Elliot Desmond?

MORTIMER. No. Sir Charles told me that Reverend Desmond had not been to the Hall since he was a child, but that he was a man of venerable appearance and of a saintly life.

(HOLMES is looking out the window.)

HOLMES. I see. Sir Henry, did you get a look at the driver of this runaway freight wagon in Oxford Street?

SIR HENRY. Not much. He looked like a teamster. Broad brimmed black hat and a full black beard.

HOLMES. Good. *(He turns back to the room.)* Dr. Mortimer, perhaps you should tell us now about this family curse Sir Henry mentioned. That is the subject of the ancient document, is it not?

MORTIMER. Yes. It is a statement made by Sir Geoffrey Baskerville, the fifth Lord of Baskerville Hall, to his sons, apparently. It tells an old story, Mr. Holmes. A wondrous and terrible story.

HOLMES. Then by all means, Doctor, tell us a story.

SIR HENRY. You're going to love this.

(HOLMES and WATSON sit, joining SIR HENRY, as MORTIMER begins reading the ancient account. Shortly after beginning the story, MORTIMER no longer looks down at the parchment, but out, as if telling a chilling tale around a camp fire. The lights dim as he speaks and throughout the story, we hear sounds: the screams of the girl, the horses galloping, the baying of the pack of dogs, etc.)

MORTIMER. Know then, that in the time of the Great Rebellion, this manor of Baskerville was held by Hugo of that name, nor can it be gainsaid that he was a most wild, profane and godless man. It chanced that this Hugo came to love (if, indeed, so dark a passion can be known under so bright a name) the daughter of a yeoman who held lands near the Baskerville estate. So it came to pass that one Michaelmas this Hugo, with five or six of his idle and wicked companions, stole

down upon the farm and carried off the maiden. When they brought her to the Hall, the maiden was placed in an upper chamber, while Hugo and his friends sat down to a long carouse, as was their nightly custom. Now, the poor lass upstairs was like to have her wits turned at the singing and shouting and terrible oaths which came up to her from below. At last in the stress of her fear, she did that which might have daunted the bravest man, for by the aid of the growth of ivy which covered (and still covers) the south wall, she came down from under the eaves, and so homeward across the moor.

Some little time later Sir Hugo stole up to her room, found the cage empty and the bird flown. He then became as one that hath a devil, for rushing down the stairs into the dining hall, he sprang upon the great table, flagons and trenchers flying before him, and he cried aloud before all the company that he would that very night render his body and soul to the Powers of Evil if he might but overtake the wench. And while the revelers stood aghast at the fury of the man, Hugo cried out that he would set the hounds upon her. Whereat he ran from the house, saddled his mare, unkenneled the pack, and giving the hounds a kerchief of the maid's, he swung them to the line, and so off full cry in the moonlight over the moor.

For some time the revelers stood agape, but at length the whole of them took horse and started in pursuit. But they had only gone a mile or two when their skins turned cold, for Sir Hugo's black mare, dabbled with white froth, her eyes bulging with fear, swept past them with trailing bridle and empty saddle. Riding slowly now, for there was a great fear upon them, the company at last came upon the hounds, whimpering in a cluster at the head of a deep gully upon the moor. Three of the revelers, the boldest, or, it may be the most drunken, rode forward down the gully to where it opened out upon a clearing; and there in the center

lay the unhappy maid where she had fallen, dead of fear and fatigue. But it was not the sight of her body, nor that of the body of Hugo Baskerville lying near her, which raised the hair upon the heads of these three dare-devil roisterers, but that crouching over Sir Hugo there stood a foul thing, a great, black beast, shaped like a hound yet larger than any hound that ever mortal eye has rested upon. And even as they looked, the thing tore the throat out of Hugo Baskerville, at which, as it turned its blazing eyes and dripping jaws upon them, the three shrieked with fear and rode for dear life, still screaming, across the moor. One, it is said, died that very night of what he'd seen, and the other twain were but broken men for the rest of their days.

Such is the tale, my sons, of the coming of the Hound which is said to have plagued our family so sorely ever since.

(Lights return as before. A moment.)

WATSON. Good Lord.

HOLMES. Well told, Doctor Mortimer.

SIR HENRY. It's a pip, isn't it, gentlemen?

MORTIMER. Do you find it interesting, Mr. Holmes?

HOLMES. To a collector of fairy-tales.

SIR HENRY. That's just what I said!

HOLMES. You don't take the legend seriously, Sir Henry?

SIR HENRY. Mr. Holmes, when I was just a kid, we heard a wolf howl up on the ridge and my father said, "There it is, Hank, the Hound of the Baskervilles." It was kind of a joke in the family.

MORTIMER. Well, it was no joke to your uncle, Sir Henry. Mr. Holmes, in the few months before his death it became increasingly clear to me that Sir Charles' nervous system was strained to the breaking point. He had taken the legend of the Hound exceedingly to heart – so much so that nothing would induce him to go near the moor at night.

HOLMES. And yet he went out on the night of his death and stood for some time at the very edge of the moor.

SIR HENRY. Why would Uncle Charles do it?

HOLMES. Why indeed? Well, we have learned of the death of Sir Charles Baskerville, been introduced to his heir and heard his quaint family legend. Now, gentlemen, be so good as to tell us *why you are here*.

MORTIMER. At the inquest following Sir Charles' death, Barrymore, his butler, said there were no traces upon the ground around the body. Apparently he did not observe any. But I did.

HOLMES. Footprints?

MORTIMER. Footprints.

HOLMES. A man's or a woman's?

MORTIMER. Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!

(beat)

HOLMES. You saw this?

MORTIMER. As clearly as I see you.

HOLMES. And you think this is evidence of some supernatural beast?

MORTIMER. I don't know what to think, Mr. Holmes.

HOLMES. I have hitherto confined my investigations to *this* world, Doctor. And you must admit that a creature that leaves a footprint in the material world must be of that world.

MORTIMER. The original hound was material enough to tug a man's throat out, and yet he was supernatural as well.

HOLMES. But Doctor, if you hold these views, why have you come to consult me at all?

MORTIMER. Because I fear what awaits Sir Henry on Dartmoor, and we need to know what might be our best course of action.

SIR HENRY. I've told you, Mortimer, I'm going down to Devon to take my place at Baskerville Hall.

MORTIMER. But you agreed with me to let –

HOLMES. Sir Henry, what was it that happened with your boots at the hotel?

SIR HENRY. What? Oh, it was just a stupid mix-up, I suppose, not worth mentioning, really.

HOLMES. Still, I'd like to hear about it.

SIR HENRY. Well, I bought two new pairs of boots yesterday in Regent Street. When I went out for dinner, I put the new pair out in the corridor to be oiled and polished. When I got back from dinner, one of the new boots was gone.

HOLMES. The other was still in the corridor?

SIR HENRY. Yes. So I sent for the bellman and raised a little ruckus and he searched high and low, but no boot. That was last night. This morning when I went to breakfast I put my old traveling boots – the ones I wore from Red Deer – out to have them cleaned. When I came back from breakfast the old boots are gone and guess what? The single boot is back.

WATSON. The new boot that had disappeared the night before?

SIR HENRY. Right. And now the bellman can't find the old boots anywhere. I'm not sure I trust him. I think he's German.

HOLMES. So was the Queen's husband. We mustn't judge him too harshly. Then it is your intention, Sir Henry, to travel to Devonshire and take up residence in Baskerville Hall?

SIR HENRY. It is.

HOLMES. There may be some danger there.

SIR HENRY. Do you mean danger from this family fiend or do you mean danger from human beings?

HOLMES. Well, that is what we have to find out.

SIR HENRY. There is no devil in hell, Mr. Holmes, and there is no man on this earth who can prevent me from going to the home of my own people, and you may take that to be my final answer.

HOLMES. That's decided then. There is only one provision, Sir Henry, which I must make. You certainly must not go to Devonshire alone.

SIR HENRY. Dr. Mortimer returns with me.

HOLMES. But Dr. Mortimer has his practice to attend to, and his house is – how far from Baskerville Hall?

MORTIMER. Fully three miles.

HOLMES. No, Sir Henry, you must take with you someone, a trusty man, who will always be by your side.

SIR HENRY. Is it possible that you might come, Mr. Holmes?

HOLMES. I'm afraid not. At the present moment one of the most revered names in England is being besmirched by a blackmailer, and only I can stop a disastrous scandal.

WATSON. But Holmes, when did you – ?

(**HOLMES** brandishes the letter he received from **MRS. HUDSON**.)

HOLMES. Just this very moment, Watson. From Mycroft.

WATSON. Oh, I see!

SIR HENRY. Whom would you recommend, then?

HOLMES. If Dr. Watson would undertake it, there is no man who is better worth having at your side when you are in a tight place.

SIR HENRY. What do you say, Doctor?

WATSON. Are you sure you won't need me, Holmes, in this new case?

HOLMES. Not for a while yet, Watson. I believe this to be the best use of your time.

WATSON. Very well, then. I will come with pleasure, Sir Henry.

SIR HENRY. All right, if it'll make Mr. Holmes happy.

MORTIMER. Thank you, Dr. Watson.

HOLMES. When are you leaving, Sir Henry?

SIR HENRY. Tomorrow morning. Will that give you enough time, Doctor?

WATSON. More than enough, Sir Henry.

SIR HENRY. Good. Well, we'd better be going.

HOLMES. Now, before you go – anything else out of the ordinary?

SIR HENRY. Well...since arriving in London I've felt this itch on my back.

HOLMES. Not one you can scratch, I take it?

SIR HENRY. No, it's...when we'd go up into the mountains for elk or deer, sometimes I'd feel this itch just below my neck. And if I looked up real quick every so often I'd see him. Maybe just a flick of his tail or his shadow in the rocks.

WATSON. Who?

SIR HENRY. A big cat. A mountain lion. They'd follow you, sometimes for days.

HOLMES. And you've felt this "itch" here in London?

SIR HENRY. Off and on.

HOLMES. Have you seen anything?

SIR HENRY. Can't say that I have.

HOLMES. No big cats in any case.

(MRS. HUDSON returns with the freshly brushed coat.)

MRS. HUDSON. Your coat, Sir Henry.

SIR HENRY. It's Hank, remember?

MRS. HUDSON. Yes, sir. As you wish, Sir...Hank.

SIR HENRY. Thank you, Edith. (*puts on his coat*) Maybe I should get in touch with Cousin Elliot Desmond and invite him for a visit. It seems wrong he hasn't been there in so long.

HOLMES. A capital idea. Well, we shall see you at Paddington in the morning.

WATSON. Goodbye.

MORTIMER. Goodbye.

(MORTIMER and SIR HENRY exit.)

HOLMES. Quick, Watson, your hat and coat! We musn't let him out of our sight!

WATSON. Holmes! You think Sir Henry's in danger here?

HOLMES. I do. Terrible danger. But – “Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety.” Shelly?

WATSON/MRS. HUDSON. Shakespeare!

HOLMES. Blast! Where's my damned hat?

MRS. HUDSON. On your head, Mr. Holmes.

HOLMES. Mrs. Hudson, we won't be back for tea.

MRS. HUDSON. What shall I do with the rarebit?

HOLMES. Damn the rarebit!

WATSON. Holmes!

HOLMES. I tell you, Watson, this is a dark business. Sir Henry no sooner sets foot in London than he feels he's being stalked, he narrowly escapes being run down in the street – no, that was no accident! – and worst of all, this nasty business of his boots in the hotel –

WATSON. His boots! You must be joking!

HOLMES. I'm in deadly earnest. Stop dawdling, Watson! Here's your coat. Grab your service revolver; it may be of use. Unless I'm very much mistaken, looking out the window ten minutes ago I saw the Big Cat himself.

MRS. HUDSON. (*steely*) Will you be back for dinner?

HOLMES. For God's sake!

WATSON. What are you planning for dinner?

MRS. HUDSON. Lamb chops.

HOLMES/WATSON. We'll be back for dinner!

HOLMES. Yes, we will be back – Edith! Come, Watson!

(And the two men rush from their lodgings as music plays and the lights change and the scene shifts to – The Street. Soundscape of a busy London thoroughfare. SIR HENRY and MORTIMER appear SL and walk along the street. The hour is struck by Big Ben and a number of MEN in dark suits and bowler hats spill out onto the street from both directions. SIR HENRY and MORTIMER pause to get their bearings and at the same time HOLMES and WATSON appear from the SL wings.)

*They see their friends and **WATSON** is about to hail them when **HOLMES** pulls him back. They confer. The crush of bowler-clad business **MEN** continues and briefly obscures **HOLMES** and **WATSON** as from the **SL** wings a **MAN** with a full black beard enters and walks past the spot where **HOLMES** and **WATSON** are standing. The **BEARDED MAN** pauses when he spots **SIR HENRY** and **MORTIMER** and **HOLMES** grabs **WATSON**'s arm when he spies the **BEARDED MAN**. **MORTIMER** and **SIR HENRY** start off again, and the **BEARDED MAN** begins to follow them when he turns back and sees **HOLMES** and **WATSON**. There is a brief, still moment of recognition and the **BEARDED MAN** bolts, disappearing **SR**.)*

*(**HOLMES** gestures to **WATSON** – “After him!” – and they rush after him, having first to negotiate through the remaining **PEDESTRIANS** on the “Street”. The curtain rises as **HOLMES** and **WATSON** exit revealing – Victoria Station. Painted backdrop and 19th Century iron. Perhaps a set of stairs up and over the railway tracks. In any case – a perfect site for a chase on foot.)*

*(**HOLMES** and **WATSON** pursue the **BEARDED MAN** through the maze of bodies and structures that is Victoria Station. The sound of trains – hissing steam, whistles screaming and up an iron staircase they climb as the **BEARDED MAN** stays out in front. Several near misses, clever deceptions- including **HOLMES** being knocked down by the **BEARDED MAN** – and finally their quarry makes it to the platform; they see him from above as he quickly purchases a ticket from a **TICKET SELLER** and then rushes off. They run to the spot but the sound of a train leaving tells us that they have lost the hunt and their prey has escaped.)*

HOLMES. Damn!

WATSON. Are you all right, Holmes?

HOLMES. I'm fine. We had him, Watson! We had him and we lost him!

WATSON. Was he the driver of the freight wagon that tried to run down Sir Henry?

HOLMES. Precisely, Watson.

(HOLMES goes to the TICKET SELLER.)

HOLMES. Pardon me, the train that just left, what's its destination?

TICKET SELLER. That's the Express to Folkestone, sir.

HOLMES. It stops at Maidstone, I believe?

TICKET SELLER. Yes sir, and Ashford, sir.

HOLMES. Right. The man you just sold a ticket to, the bearded man.

TICKET SELLER. Oh yes, sir. He bought a through ticket, he did.

HOLMES. To Folkestone?

TICKET SELLER. Oh no, sir. To Boulogne.

HOLMES. I see. Did you by any chance note the colour of his eyes?

TICKET SELLER. His eyes?

HOLMES. Yes and did you get a sense of where he was from?

TICKET SELLER. Where he was – I'm not in the habit –

HOLMES. Did he sound like a Londoner? Or possibly a West Countryman?

TICKET SELLER. I sold him a ticket!

HOLMES. Yes, I already know that. Thank you.

(HOLMES turns away in disgust.)

TICKET SELLER. He did tell me his name.

HOLMES. He told you his name?

TICKET SELLER. Yes. I don't know why. That's not usual.

HOLMES. What did he say? Exactly.

TICKET SELLER. He said – "You've just sold a through ticket to France to Mr. Sherlock Holmes." Does that help?

HOLMES. Yes. Yes it does. Thank you.

(TICKET SELLER exits.)

WATSON. Well.

HOLMES. A touch, Watson, an undeniable touch! I tell you, Watson, this time we may have a foe who is worthy of our steel.

WATSON. But, Holmes, who do you think he is?

HOLMES. I daresay he's the big cat Sir Henry has felt watching him. Watson, you must learn all you can about Sir Henry's neighbors; anyone he might come in contact with. His servants included. You must engage with them all, suspect everyone and trust no one. Write me your observations as often as possible. Keep your revolver with you at all times, and never let Sir Henry venture out on the moor alone.

WATSON. Is it that serious, Holmes?

HOLMES. I'm afraid so, Watson – particularly taken in conjunction with Sir Charles' death.

WATSON. But Sir Charles died of heart failure.

HOLMES. Yes. But what happened before he died? Do you recall the detail about his footprints?

WATSON. Yes, for some reason he was walking on his tip-toes.

HOLMES. No, Watson. The man was running. Running away from something. Running for his very life!

(Train whistle! Steam hisses! Music up.)

(fast curtain)

Scene Two

(The sounds of a journey by steam train. Curtain rises on a "show curtain" that might evoke the Devon countryside or a village train station. MORTIMER, WATSON and SIR HENRY enter in coats and hats, carrying their bags.)

MORTIMER. Welcome to Grimpen, Sir Henry.

(SIR HENRY takes in the layers of gray in the vista.)

SIR HENRY. Thank you, Mortimer. It does look a little grim, doesn't it?

WATSON. At least it's not raining.

(PERKINS, a local drayman, enters opposite.)

MORTIMER. Ah, Perkins.

PERKINS. Afternoon, Dr. Mortimer.

MORTIMER. Sir Henry, this is Perkins, our local drayman.

SIR HENRY. Nice to meet you, Mr. Perkins.

(SIR HENRY offers his hand, which flummoxes PERKINS, who touches his cap.)

PERKINS. A pleasure, m'lord. Here, let me take that.

(PERKINS reaches for SIR HENRY's valise.)

SIR HENRY. No, I've got it, Mr. Perkins.

PERKINS. But, m'lord –

MORTIMER. Those are Sir Henry's bags as well, Perkins.

PERKINS. Yes, sir.

MORTIMER. We've seen a number of guards on horseback, Perkins. Has there been another escape?

PERKINS. Aye, sir. He's been out five days now, but they've had no sign of him yet. The farmers don't like it, sir, and that's a fact.

MORTIMER. But don't they receive five pounds if they can give information?

PERKINS. Yes, sir. But five pounds is a poor thing compared to having your throat cut. He isn't any ordinary convict.

MORTIMER. Who is it?

PERKINS. Selden.

WATSON. Selden? The Notting Hill murderer?

PERKINS. The very same, sir.

WATSON. Good Lord.

SIR HENRY. He's a bad one, is he?

PERKINS. Bad as they come, sir.

WATSON. Yes, I remember the case well. The murders Selden committed were of such a brutal nature, there were serious doubts of his sanity, so instead of hanging him, his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment.

PERKINS. That's why they had him in Princetown.

SIR HENRY. Princetown?

MORTIMER. Yes, Sir Henry, Dartmoor prison is located in Princetown.

WATSON. It houses the Criminally Insane.

MORTIMER. It's just five miles across the moor.

SIR HENRY. Well, that's a cheery bit of news. At least it's not raining.

PERKINS. It will be m'lord. There'll be a proper storm come up before dark. This way, gentlemen.

(They follow PERKINS towards the wagon and a clap of thunder accompanies them. Show curtain rises and Baskerville Hall is revealed. The sound of a cloudburst as the men run through the rain and into the Hall.)

Scene Three

(Arrival at Baskerville Hall. SIR HENRY, WATSON and MORTIMER enter the main room of Baskerville Hall, shrugging off the rain, with PERKINS bringing up the rear, carrying bags. BARRYMORE – a man with a full black beard – greets them.)

SIR HENRY. It's sheeting down now!

BARRYMORE. Good evening, gentlemen.

SIR HENRY. Oh, hello. You must be Mr. Barrymore.

BARRYMORE. I am, sir. Welcome to Baskerville Hall, Sir Henry.

SIR HENRY. Well, thank you.

MORTIMER. Hello Barrymore.

BARRYMORE. Good evening, Doctor.

MORTIMER. Barrymore, this is Dr. Watson.

BARRYMORE. Good evening, sir. Welcome.

WATSON. Thank you. Did you enjoy your time in London, Barrymore?

BARRYMORE. I beg your pardon, sir?

WATSON. Didn't I see you in London yesterday? At Victoria Station?

BARRYMORE. No sir. I've not been to the great city since my marriage to Mrs. Barrymore.

WATSON. And when was that?

BARRYMORE. Fully fifteen years ago, sir.

WATSON. Ah. I see. My mistake, then.

BARRYMORE. Yes, sir. Sir Henry, I took the liberty of lighting the fire in anticipation of your arrival. Shall I tell Mrs. Barrymore to prepare a meal?

SIR HENRY. Oh, no, Mr. Barrymore. It's awful late and I wouldn't want to put your Missus out.

BARRYMORE. *(imperturbably)* That is most kind of you, Sir Henry, but it is no trouble at all. Perkins.

PERKINS. Yes, Mr. Barrymore?

BARRYMORE. Take Dr. Watson's bags up to the southwest bedroom.

PERKINS. Yes, sir.

BARRYMORE. I'll take your bags, Sir Henry.

SIR HENRY. You can leave that old carpet bag, Mr. Barrymore. It's full of all my old traveling clothes. You think the local church could use them?

BARRYMORE. I'm sure they would be most welcome, sir.

SIR HENRY. Here, give them this too.

(He takes off his old coat and gives it to BARRYMORE.)

BARRYMORE. Will you be staying as well, Dr. Mortimer?

MORTIMER. No, Barrymore, I think not. I'll be departing shortly.

SIR HENRY. Hold on, Mr. Barrymore. *(to MORTIMER)* Doctor, there's an escaped murderer out there, are you sure you don't want to spend the night?

MORTIMER. I feel quite secure, Sir Henry. As you saw, there are soldiers scattered over the moor and of course, Selden may have already fallen victim to the Grimpen Mire.

SIR HENRY. Or the Hound of the Baskervilles. *(laughs)* Tell me, Mr. Barrymore, have you heard how he broke out?

BARRYMORE. Apparently, Sir Henry, he managed to overpower the guard and dress himself in his uniform. Thus disguised he then walked out and hasn't been seen since. That was a week ago.

SIR HENRY. He's a clever maniac, that's for sure. I hope they get him soon.

BARRYMORE. Indeed, sir. As do we all.

SIR HENRY. I hope you'll at least stay for a drink, Dr. Mortimer. It's been a long day and I know I can use one.

MORTIMER. Thank you, Sir Henry. I confess, I could "use" one myself.

SIR HENRY. *(moving to the decanter and glasses)* That's the idea. Dr. Watson?

WATSON. Please.

(SIR HENRY beats BARRYMORE to the tray and starts pouring. BARRYMORE draws back discreetly, SIR HENRY oblivious.)

SIR HENRY. Well, gentlemen, I have to say this countryside knocks me for a loop. I've never seen anything like it. It's not the cheeriest place I know of, but I expect things will seem brighter in the morning.

MORTIMER. The moor can be forbidding at first. Nonetheless, it has a mysterious power of attraction. And, of course, it's endlessly interesting to note the influence it has exerted on the populace over generations. It explains the predominance of the brachiocephalic skull shape among the inhabitants, which of course accounts for the relatively rare conjunction of taciturnity and imagination amongst them. Barrymore here is an excellent example.

BARRYMORE. Thank you, sir.

(SIR HENRY is looking at the portraits on the wall.)

SIR HENRY. These all the relatives?

MORTIMER. Quite so. This one is Sir Charles, of course. It's fairly recent – he only had it done two years ago.

SIR HENRY. And who is this?

MORTIMER. Oh! I see Sir Hugo has returned. Your doing, Barrymore?

BARRYMORE. Yes, sir, I took the liberty. The empty space on the wall seemed distracting. And with Sir Charles gone – I beg your pardon, Sir Henry.

SIR HENRY. No, no, that's all right. (*He regards the portrait of Sir Hugo.*) So this is The "Wicked Lord"? Handsome devil, in a way – piercing eyes. So Uncle Charles had Hugo's portrait taken down?

MORTIMER. Yes. Shortly after he had his own done. He had never felt comfortable looking at it. He even confessed to me once that he felt "stalked" by it. Eventually, he had it relegated to the lumber room.

(A moment while all four of them look at it.)

SIR HENRY. Well, if I start feeling like that I'll turn the damned thing to the wall.

BARRYMORE. Will that be all, sir?

SIR HENRY. All what?

(He glances at WATSON, who head nods toward the door.)

Oh! Yes, thanks Mr. Barrymore. That will do it. *(gets it)*
You may go.

BARRYMORE. Very good, sir. If you should require anything, please ring. If I may be so bold, it is the long bell pull you see to your left. *(exits)*

SIR HENRY. It's tough to get the hang of all this.

WATSON. You'll get used to it in time, Sir Henry

SIR HENRY. I was thinking, Dr. Mortimer, that as soon as I get settled in here I'd like to arrange to meet some of my neighbors. Have a dinner for everybody here.

MORTIMER. Such a gesture on your part would be warmly welcomed. There aren't many of us. Mr. Frankland of Lafter Hall and his wife; Stapleton the Naturalist and his sister, Beryl, a lovely young woman; quite a remarkable person, actually. I'd be happy to help you arrange it whenever you like.

SIR HENRY. I want you both to know, I appreciate the help you've already given me. As you can see, I'm a bit of a fish out of water here.

MORTIMER. Sir Henry, I have no doubt your natural good sense and open demeanor will see you through. And now if you will excuse me, I really must get on home. Thank you for the drink.

SIR HENRY. I don't suppose there's any chance I can get you to call me "Hank", is there?

MORTIMER. None whatever, Sir Henry.

(MORTIMER exits.)

SIR HENRY. Well, Dr. Watson, I don't mind admitting I'm done in.

WATSON. You'll be right as rain in the morning, Sir Henry.
A good walk across your estate will make a new man of you. However, let me remind you that Holmes was quite insistent that you not go unaccompanied on the moor.

SIR HENRY. Now Dr. Watson, I've spent weeks at a time alone on the prairie, with nothing –

WATSON. With nothing but your faithful steed and your Colt revolver, I'm sure, but if Holmes says you must not risk being alone on the moor, believe me, he has reason.

SIR HENRY. Well, I haven't the strength left to argue the matter now. I think it's time for me to turn in. (*He pulls the bell-pull.*) How about you?

WATSON. Yes, but I must first write up a quick report for Holmes, so I can send it off in the morning.

(**MRS. BARRYMORE** enters.)

MRS. BARRYMORE. Yes, Sir Henry?

SIR HENRY. Yes, ma' – Mrs. Barrymore?

MRS. BARRYMORE. Yes, Sir Henry.

SIR HENRY. I – I'm sorry, are you all right?

MRS. BARRYMORE. Quite all right, thank you, Sir Henry. I fear I may have contracted a cold in the last few days. May I be of assistance?

SIR HENRY. Yes indeed. We would like to go to our rooms, if possible.

MRS. BARRYMORE. Yes, sir.

SIR HENRY. I hope you're not upset over the escaped convict. I'm sure there's nothing to fear.

MRS. BARRYMORE. I'm sure you are right, Sir Henry.

SIR HENRY. And with any luck, that big bog out there has swallowed him up – what's it called again?

MRS. BARRYMORE. The great Grimpen Mire.

SIR HENRY. If it has got him, he couldn't have had a more appropriate end, from what I hear of him. Savage brute.

MRS. BARRYMORE. (*shaken*) Still, it's a terrible fate for anyone, Sir, man or beast. There's nary a man or woman living near the moor who hasn't at some time or another watched the horrible flailings and listened to the piteous cries of some wretched creature caught in its grasp. (*catches herself*) I beg your pardon, sir. I'm not quite myself. Both Mr. Barrymore and I were very attached to Sir Charles, and his death was a terrible shock. We of course shall stay with you until you have made your own arrangements, but as soon as it is convenient for you, we shall be leaving.

SIR HENRY. Hold on – what do you mean?

MRS. BARRYMORE. (*becoming more distraught*) Sir, it's impossible for us to remain! Each day that passes makes it even more –

(**BARRYMORE** *enters.*)

BARRYMORE. Excuse me, Sir Henry. I lit the fires in your rooms. I trust Mrs. Barrymore has been looking after you.

SIR HENRY. Yes, but why are you set on leaving? Because if you have a better offer –

BARRYMORE. Not at all, Sir Henry, if you'll pardon my interruption. You see, as Sir Charles was very generous to us in his will, we are considering retiring from service altogether and opening a small inn.

SIR HENRY. Is that all it is, Mrs. Barrymore?

MRS. BARRYMORE. Yes, sir, that's all it is.

SIR HENRY. Well, I hope you won't leave right away. I don't mind admitting I'm going to need all the help I can get.

BARRYMORE. Of course, Sir Henry. I assure you, we will do nothing precipitous.

SIR HENRY. Well, it's been a long day. Mrs. Barrymore, can you take us to our rooms?

MRS. BARRYMORE. Of course, sir.

(As SIR HENRY and WATSON turn to leave, BARRYMORE pulls his wife to him.)

BARRYMORE. It won't be much longer, Margaret – steady!

MRS. BARRYMORE. This way, gentlemen.

SIR HENRY. Off we go, Dr. Watson.

(They exit. BARRYMORE waits until they leave, then walks to the door and listens to make sure they're gone. A flash of distant lightning. Rumble of thunder. He takes a lantern and goes to the window. He peers out for a moment, then raises the lantern slowly several times. He peers out. Moves the lantern laterally several times. Waits.)

BARRYMORE. God help us all.

(He blows out the lantern. Blackout.)

(Immediately, a pool of light comes up on WATSON in his room. He wears a dressing gown and is finishing a communiqué to HOLMES.)

WATSON. ...and though Barrymore claims not to have been in London in fifteen years, Holmes, I'm not entirely convinced. And as if that weren't enough to be concerned about, Selden, the notorious Notting Hill murderer, has escaped from Dartmoor prison and is hiding somewhere out on the moor. I think –

(He stops, hearing the muffled sound of weeping from somewhere in the house. He opens his door and steps out into the hallway, at the end of which – upstage – are French doors, the suggestion of an exterior balcony beyond.)

Who is there? Hello? Hello?

(BARRYMORE appears from around the corner.)

BARRYMORE. Yes, sir?

WATSON. Did you hear someone weeping just now?

BARRYMORE. Weeping, sir? No, sir. Perhaps it was the wind – the branches scratching on the window-panes.

WATSON. No, I think I can distinguish the difference.
Is everything all right, Barrymore?

BARRYMORE. Yes, sir. I'm just checking that all the windows
and doors are securely fastened. *(beat)* Will that be all,
sir?

WATSON. Yes, thank you.

BARRYMORE. Then good night, sir.

WATSON. Good night.

(A bit of a stand-off. Finally, BARRYMORE turns and disappears around the corner. After a moment WATSON goes to the French doors. Peers into the driving rain. Checks the locks. Then he returns to his door and disappears into darkness. Simultaneous flash of lightning and deafening clap of thunder, revealing a terrible figure looking in at the French doors – ragged, soaked, with the twisted face of a madman.)

(Lightning. Thunder.)

(Curtain.)

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