

Acting Edition

Ken Ludwig's Moriarty A New Sherlock Holmes Adventure

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|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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KEN LUDWIG'S MORIARTY was first produced by the Cleveland Play House (Mark Cuddy, Guest Artistic & Managing Director), Cleveland, OH, and premiered on April 29, 2023. The performance was directed by Mark Brokaw and Michael Barakiva, with scenic design by Chika Shimizu, costume design by Lex Liang, lighting design by David Lander, and original music and sound design by Lindsay Jones. The Production Stage Manager was John Godbout. The cast was as follows:

SHERLOCK HOLMES Christian Pedersen
DOCTOR WATSON Nick Gaswirth
MORIARTY, KING OTTO, & OTHERS Jeffrey M. Bender
IRENE ADLER, MRS. HUDSON, & CARTWRIGHT Olivia Gilliatt
DAISY, MRS. BARABAS, HILDA KLEBB, & OTHERS Talley Gale

CHARACTERS

The play is written for five actors

Actor One

SHERLOCK HOLMES

Actor Two

DOCTOR WATSON

Actor Three

RUPERT PERKINS

KING OTTO VON ORMSTEIN

PROFESSOR MORIARTY

MRS. GASNER

PORTER

CONDUCTOR

PADDY KEYS

NEFERTITI

MYCROFT HOLMES

LESTRADE

ROUGH WITH A BLUDGEON

BARTENDER

ANNOUNCER

Actor Four

IRENE ADLER

MRS. HUDSON

CARTWRIGHT

Actor Five

MIROSLAV HAČEK

DAISY

MILKER

VICAR

MRS. BARABAS

HILDA KLEBB

TOBY

CAB DRIVER

HANS

SETTING

The action of the play takes place in London,
Cambridgeshire, and Europe

TIME

Circa 1891

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I did not intend to become an author of Sherlock Holmes plays. Then again, Arthur Conan Doyle didn't intend to become known for writing Sherlock Holmes adventures either. But the character he created is such an iconic force of nature that he's hard to resist.

In 2015, I premiered a theatrical adaptation of the most famous and oft-read Sherlock Holmes adventure, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Entitled *Baskerville*, the play was a one-off: a straightforward adaptation of one of the greatest adventure novels ever written. When I conceived it, I gave myself an extra challenge by writing it for only five actors, thereby hoping to make the play as much about the world of the theatre as it was about Sherlock Holmes. In the end, this device – using five actors to play over thirty-five characters – gave the piece an antic theatricality that I liked.

Selecting *The Hound of the Baskervilles* as the underlying story for a play about Sherlock Holmes proved to be a good decision for several reasons. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is a novella – a short novel – and therefore the perfect length for a play. It has a terrific villain in the oddball butterfly hunter, Jack Stapleton; an endearing romance between young lovers; and two main locales of romantic proportions: fog-shrouded Victorian London, and the vast mysterious beauty of the Devonshire moorlands. Throw in a gothic manor house, an escaped convict, and a glowing hell-hound, and you have the perfect recipe for a mystery play.

Baskerville proved to be a success on stage, so I decided to return to Holmes and Watson to see if they had another stage adventure in them. And if I had another in me.

When I decided to write a second Sherlock Holmes adventure for the stage, I found a much harder task ahead of me. Conan Doyle wrote three other Holmes novellas, *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Sign of the Four*, and *The Valley of Fear*, but I found their stories too byzantine for a good play, and none has the wonderful pulse of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. I then turned to the fifty-six short stories that Conan Doyle wrote about

Holmes and Watson, and while I found endless examples of Conan Doyle's trademark crisp character portraits and well-built mysteries, even the best of them, including perennial favorites like "Silver Blaze," "The Blue Carbuncle," and "The Speckled Band," were too short for a complete play. With no single novella or short story to rely on, I needed a different approach to this piece, and I made two decisions early in the process that shaped the play at every stage.

First, I decided to change the genre. *Baskerville* is a comedy-mystery – a classic whodunnit, as are most of the Sherlock Holmes stories and novellas. In a classic whodunnit, the heart of the narrative is the mystery, with its string of suspects, clues, and deductions. As I cast about for a plot for my new play, I read "The Final Problem" several times, always asking myself why this story in particular was so compelling to me. It is the one and only Sherlock Holmes story in which Professor Moriarty appears, which is notable in itself, considering the long afterlife Holmes's nemesis has had in pastiches and adaptations. Beyond that, though, I decided that what's truly unusual about "The Final Problem" is that it's not a mystery at all. It's a melodrama.

A melodrama is essentially a popular work of fiction, often for the stage, filled with sensationalized moments of danger, agony, and fear, peopled with exaggerated characters, and primarily intended to appeal to the emotions. Melodramas depend heavily on plot as opposed to complex moral issues. And the characters are often stereotyped into heroes, heroines, helpmeets, and villains.

Historically, hundreds of melodramas were written for the stage in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My own favorite is *Tosca*, both the play by Sardou and the opera by Puccini. The opera is now one of the most popular musical works of all time, but when it first appeared, it was referred to as "that shabby little shocker." Another favorite is *Ruddigore*, the operetta by Gilbert and Sullivan, which is a satire of melodrama. I also have a particular fondness for *The Bells*, one of the greatest triumphs of the most famous British actor of the second half of the nineteenth century, Sir Henry Irving. Indeed, *The Bells* was so popular in its day that Irving programmed the play at the Lyceum Theatre year after year, always playing the starring role.

The form also offers opportunities for spectacular set pieces. One of these came ready to order in "The Final Problem": the final, fatal struggle at the Reichenbach Falls between Sherlock Holmes and Professor Moriarty. As described by Watson, the Reichenbach Falls is

a fearful place. The torrent, swollen by the melting snow, plunges into a tremendous abyss, from which the spray rolls up like the smoke from a burning house. The shaft into which the river hurls itself is an immense chasm, lined by glistening coal-black rock, and narrowing into a creaming, boiling pit of incalculable depth.

The setting is tailor-made for the emotional grandeur of a melodrama. Luckily for me, creating such an abyss of death on stage is the work of designers; as a playwright, I need only write “Scene Eight: The Reichenbach Falls.”

An additional draw of writing a melodrama was the opportunity to create a play full of chases, show-downs, shoot-outs, and other types of derring-do that characterized a half century of our English-language stage tradition. Plays of this kind went out of fashion by the 1920s, at which point drama moved into the world of naturalism. But as I read and reread the fifty-six short stories of the Sherlock Holmes canon in search of a plot for my new play, I decided that the melodramatic form was the sandbox I wanted to play in. It suits the grand world of Sherlock Holmes, and *Moriarty* is my homage to the tradition.

The second decision I made in writing *Moriarty* was to bring to life all of the most iconic characters that Conan Doyle invented in his brilliant creation of the Sherlock Holmes legend. These include Professor Moriarty from “The Final Problem,” Irene Adler from “A Scandal in Bohemia,” and Sherlock’s brother Mycroft from “The Bruce-Partington Plans.” I started with Holmes’s arch-nemesis, Professor Moriarty, and their famous mortal struggle. Conan Doyle never explained why, of all his foes, Moriarty’s defeat was worth Holmes’s very life. In truth, Conan Doyle invented Moriarty simply as a mechanism to kill off his most beloved character so the author could focus his attention on his other literary endeavors. I wanted to give Holmes and Moriarty a history that illuminated their relationship.

I created a back story that dates their relationship to Holmes’s days as a student at Cambridge University. Moriarty is a professor, so why not make him Holmes’s professor – a beloved mentor who betrayed the trust of his young acolyte and escaped into the underworld to wreak havoc on London. Holmes, blaming himself for failing to see the evil in Moriarty, dedicates his life to bringing criminals to justice in an attempt to atone. And when Moriarty resurfaces, he charges himself with tracking the professor down to a final, deadly confrontation. It seemed to me that this storyline had melodrama written all over it.

The second supporting character I drafted into my play was Irene Adler. Holmes meets Adler in “A Scandal in Bohemia,” and she never appears again in any of the stories. While it is clear from the very first sentence that Holmes admires her, he very explicitly does *not* fall in love with her:

To Sherlock Holmes she is always *the* woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex. It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions,

and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen, but as a lover he would have placed himself in a false position.

But a melodrama needs a love story, and like many interpreters of the Sherlock Holmes mythos, I decided to make Irene Adler the love of Sherlock's life. In essence, I wanted to balance the play's sensational battle between good and evil with an equally sensational romance, and how could I resist "*the woman*"?

As depicted in "A Scandal in Bohemia," Adler is American; she is mischievous, brazen, and she challenges Holmes at every turn. I tried to retain the Irene Adler of "Scandal," but I expanded her presence and have her join Holmes on his chase to capture Moriarty, driven by her own quest for revenge against the professor. This brings her to the fearsome Reichenbach Falls along with Holmes and Moriarty, where the final, fatal reckoning of the play takes place.

Finally, I decided to include Holmes's elder brother, Mycroft, as a character in the play. He appears in a few of the short stories, where he is depicted as part of the intelligence service in Her Majesty's government – sometimes speculated by fans to be the prototype for the mysterious M in the James Bond universe. Mycroft is said to be smarter than Sherlock, but too lazy to do the kind of legwork necessary to be a detective. He is a founding member of a private members' club for the most "unsocial and unclubbable" men in London, where no one is allowed to speak aloud. I decided that he, too, was custom-built for melodrama; and frankly, he was just too much fun for a comic playwright to resist. Mycroft led me to the short story "The Bruce-Partington Plans," which became the glue that held the two acts of the play together.

The wider world of Sherlock Holmes is peopled with colorful characters by the dozen, characters with whom we love to spend time – not just Holmes, Watson, Professor Moriarty, Irene Adler, and Mycroft Holmes, but also Mrs. Hudson, Inspector Lestrade, and the Baker Street Irregulars. I was determined that *Moriarty* would include them all.

The ragged band of street kids who help Holmes on his adventures, The Baker Street Irregulars, gave their name to one of the most storied literary societies in the world. The founder of that society – of which I am proud to be a member – called the Sherlock Holmes adventures "a textbook of friendship," and this play centers primarily on the bone-deep friendship of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. That is the heart of the myth that Conan Doyle created, and *Moriarty* is my attempt to give us all yet another opportunity to experience the comic joy and melodramatic pyrotechnics of the Sherlock Holmes legend. I hope you enjoy this modest addition.

*For my newest urchins, Kinsley and Reagan,
who delight me every day and, like Sherlock and Watson,
remain enticing and joyful mysteries.*

Steel True
Blade Straight

Epitaph on the gravestone of
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
All Saints Churchyard
Minstead, England

ACT ONE

Prologue

*(We see two men alone in a room at the back of a tavern. One of them, **MIROSLAV HAČEK**, an agent of the Bohemian Police Force, is questioning an underworld criminal named **RUPERT PERKINS**.)*

HAČEK. Tell me who you work for.

PERKINS. I can't tell you.

HAČEK. Why not?

PERKINS. I'm frightened.

HAČEK. More frightened of him than of me?

PERKINS. Yes.

(BANG!)

(HAČEK bangs on the table.)

HAČEK. *YOU SHOULD NOT BE!*

PERKINS. *AHH!*

HAČEK. *TELL ME!*

PERKINS. *No! If I tell you, he'll kill my family!*

HAČEK. And I vill kill them *IF YOU DO NOT TELL ME!*

PERKINS. No. Please. He'll stop at nothing. If you are not loyal to him, then he...he's ruthless.

HAČEK. Tell me his name.

PERKINS. No.

HAČEK. *TELL ME!*

PERKINS. ...His name is...Moriarty. Professor James Moriarty.

HAČEK. Thank you. Now you vill tell me where to find him.

(HAČEK turns away. PERKINS seizes his chance: he shoves a pill into his mouth, bites down and screams in agony.)

PERKINS. *AGHHHHHHHH!*

HAČEK. *No! Stop it! Spit out the pill!*

PERKINS. *Agh!*

HAČEK. *We are not finished!*

PERKINS. *Agh! Agh!*

(PERKINS falls to the ground, gasping for air, his body contorted, with rivers of foam spilling out of his mouth.)

(HAČEK looks on in astonishment.)

HAČEK. Cyanide!

(At which moment, the lights change, and we hear the disembodied, haunting voice of PROFESSOR MORIARTY intoning a single syllable into the darkness.)

MORIARTY. Holmes...

(The lights fade.)

End of Prologue

Scene One: The Opera House

*(We are at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, London, 1891. Onstage, Mimi and Rodolfo are singing La Bohème, and in one of the boxes, we see **SHERLOCK HOLMES**, his head thrown back with a Byronic air, listening intently. Next to him is **DOCTOR WATSON**, and in a box on the other side of the auditorium sits **IRENE ADLER**.)*

*(She is a raven-haired beauty of such intensity and irony that the very air around her seems shocked into stillness. **SHERLOCK HOLMES**, as he absorbs the lushness of the sounds from the stage, sees **MISS ADLER** and stares at her with a look of curiosity. She glows with the intensity of a Greek goddess.)*

WATSON. *(To us.)* To Sherlock Holmes she was always the woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipsed and predominated the whole of her sex.

(The voices on stage rise to beauty in the La Bohème duet “O soave fanciulla.”)*

He first saw Miss Adler from his box at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. I happened to glance at him at the time and it was obvious that – quite uncharacteristically for a man who feared that emotion might ever interfere with his reason – he was smitten by her instantly.

At the time, he had no occasion to speak with her – nor did he during our frequent visits to the opera that

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season. But he would say, much later, after the case in question had reached its unexpected, shocking conclusion, that despite her beauty, or perhaps because of it, she was a woman destined for a tragic end.

(We hear the sounds of a London street of the period: the pleasant clip-clopping of the horses and the tolling of bells.)

The case began on a cheerful sunlit morning at 221B Baker Street, the address I was sharing once again with Sherlock Holmes. My wife of four years had passed away suddenly in the Spring of that year, and I had moved back into our digs with a heavy heart that had at last begun to heal, in no small part thanks to the presence of my dear friend, Sherlock Holmes. To others he was a hero of great fame, but to me, he was simply my best friend.

(The scene changes to the drawing room of 221B Baker Street.)

(221B is filled with sunlight streaming in through the windows. It is the room we have come to expect from all of the masterful stories and many of the adaptations of the Holmes and Watson canon. There are comfortable chairs, eccentric furnishings, letters stuck to the mantel with a jackknife, and evidence of chemical experiments on the desk. The room exudes the Sherlock Holmes we love to be with.)

Scene Two: 221B Baker Street

(HOLMES walks in wearing his dressing gown and greets the housekeeper and the scullery maid as usual.)

HOLMES. Good morning, Mrs. Hudson. Daisy.

(DAISY is the scullery maid in a mob cap, scrubbing the floor for dear life.)

DAISY. G'morning, sir!

MRS. HUDSON. I hope you will have some breakfast this morning, Mr. Holmes. You are wasting away.

HOLMES. Mrs. Hudson, please don't obsess.

MRS. HUDSON. Oh, just look at you. You don't sleep at night. The house is filled with that foul tobacco smoke of yours, and you don't even open your mail anymore. Look at this. It arrived *yesterday*. It might be a client.

HOLMES. Of course it's a client.

MRS. HUDSON. You should open it.

HOLMES. I don't need to open it. I know perfectly well what it says by looking at the envelope.

WATSON. Oh come now, Holmes. That's going a bit far.

HOLMES. It is child's play, Watson.

MRS. HUDSON. For you, perhaps, because you're...well, you know who you are.

HOLMES. Mrs. Hudson. You have seen my methods a hundred times. Employ them yourself. This instant. What do you think?

MRS. HUDSON. Me?

HOLMES. Yes. Do your best. Something tells me you'll do quite well.

(She takes the envelope and examines it.)

MRS. HUDSON. Well... I-I-I think whoever wrote it is a... servant of some kind. Yes. A servant. And he works for a...nobleman. Or a king. That's it, he works for a king!

(She smells the envelope.)

And I think it's a king from one of those...exotic countries, like Silesia. No. Wrong. It's Bohemia. Yes. And he's coming this morning on urgent business, he'll be in a hurry, and don't be surprised if he's wearing a *black mask*. There. How's that? What do you think?!

HOLMES. I think you opened the letter this morning and read it.

MRS. HUDSON. Well of course I did, you silly man. How else could I possibly know all that.

(DAISY laughs with delight.)

WATSON. Well done, Mrs. Hudson.

DAISY. I hear a carriage arriving.

HOLMES. *(A glance out the window.)* And I see a pair of colts worth a hundred and fifty guineas apiece.

(We hear someone knocking at the front door.)

MRS. HUDSON. *I'm coming, I'm coming! Keep your shirt on!* Come along, Daisy. And Mr. Holmes, eat your breakfast.

(DAISY giggles and they exit together.)

WATSON. *(To us.)* This was the moment I cherished most. A sound on the stairs, a knock at the door and the sudden arrival of some new mystery.

(Knock knock!)

HOLMES. Enter, please.

(A giant of a man strides into the room. He is dressed richly in fur and silk, and he wears a black mask over his eyes. He surveys HOLMES and WATSON intently.)

THE MASKED MAN. *(With a harsh Bohemian accent.)* You haff had my note?

HOLMES. I have indeed. And you are –?

THE MASKED MAN. I am Count von Kramm, servant to the King of Bohemia, and you must promise me the utmost secrecy.

(To WATSON.) You. Get out.

HOLMES. It is both or nothing.

THE MASKED MAN. I do not like it.

HOLMES. I don't like most things. Have a quince.

(HOLMES tosses him a quince, which he catches easily.)

THE MASKED MAN. I do not vant a qvince!

HOLMES. Please be seated and tell me your problem.

THE MASKED MAN. I have come to you about some letters concerning a love affair that my master had with a Miss Irene Adler. The matter is now pressing because the King is about to marry a foreign princess, and if she knew about the King's affair, she would break off the engagement like that!

HOLMES. Which would of course have disastrous European results, don't you agree, your Majesty?

THE MASKED MAN. *(Spluttering.)* "Your-your-your Majesty?" How dare you question me!

HOLMES. Oh come now, it's obvious that I'm speaking to King Otto of Bohemia, not his servant, his ambassador or the leader of his marching band, despite the size of the hat you're wearing.

THE MASKED MAN. *I am insulted! How dare you say such a thing!*

*(He rips the hat from his head, takes a step towards **HOLMES** – and **WATSON** stands quickly and intervenes, instinctively protecting **HOLMES**.)*

WATSON. Sir!

*(Beat. Then **THE MASKED MAN** stamps his foot and tears the mask from his face.)*

KING OTTO. How did you know?

HOLMES. Aside from your impatience, your expensive horses, and the signet ring you forgot to remove from your little finger, it is quite well-known that the hereditary line of Ormstein are all left-handed.

KING OTTO. The quince.

HOLMES. The quince.

KING OTTO. Bah. I have come all the way from Prague to consult you.

HOLMES. Then pray consult.

KING OTTO. You enrage me.

WATSON. He does that to most people.

*(**KING OTTO** takes a breath and begins:)*

KING OTTO. A year ago I made the acquaintance of a beautiful American actress named Irene Adler and she turned my heart into somersaults.

HOLMES. And you wrote her some compromising letters and you want them back.

KING OTTO. *(Astonished.)* How do you know these things?

HOLMES. It is my business to know things. But tell me, how can anyone prove that the letters are real?

KING OTTO. The handwriting.

HOLMES. You could say it's a forgery.

KING OTTO. My note paper.

HOLMES. Say it was stolen.

KING OTTO. There is a photograph.

HOLMES. Oh.

KING OTTO. We are both in the photograph. In bed. In a highly unusual position.

WATSON. Oh dear.

KING OTTO. I was mad – insane! But such is love, as you are no doubt aware.

HOLMES. I am not aware, but the photograph must be recovered.

KING OTTO. Of course it must! It is now with Miss Adler's sister. Her name is *Alice* Adler and she is held by people who are blackmailing me for a great sum of money.

HOLMES. I suggest you pay it.

KING OTTO. I would pay anything! But they have gone silent, and my wedding is less than a week away.

HOLMES. Do you know who they are?

KING OTTO. I have no idea. My agents say there is a man behind it who is known in criminal circles as Professor *Moriarty*.

(HOLMES reacts. He is all attention.)

HOLMES. You are certain of this?

KING OTTO. Yes, and they say he is terrifying. Last week, my people had one of his henchmen cornered, but instead of answering all their questions, he bites on a pill and dies in front of them!

(HOLMES is alert, his pulse racing. His questions are like darts of precision.)

HOLMES. Where did this happen?

KING OTTO. In the back of a tavern.

HOLMES. Where?

KING OTTO. Does it matter?

HOLMES. *Where?*

KING OTTO. *In Cheapside, at the Bull and Bear, but why does it matter?!*

HOLMES. Do you know where the sister is being held?

KING OTTO. We think so. It is called Priory Cottage, in the village of Coulton in Cambridgeshire.

HOLMES. Excellent. Go. Now. I'll let you know when I can see you again.

KING OTTO. *(Spluttering.)* You will "let me know"? I am the King. I will not be dismissed by a mere –

HOLMES. *Get out! Now!*

(KING OTTO stares furiously at HOLMES, then stamps his foot, gives a cry of anger and stalks out.)

(The light changes, and the room is suddenly dark and dangerous.)

(Time has stopped once again, and out of nowhere, we hear the voice of PROFESSOR MORIARTY:)

MORIARTY. *HOLMES.*

(HOLMES looks up. WATSON doesn't hear it.)

WATSON. Holmes. Holmes, what is it? What are you not telling me?

HOLMES. A great deal, but I'll explain on the train. Meet me at King's Cross, Platform Nine, in one hour and bring Cartwright and Milker with you. Have them pick up these items along the way.

(He scribbles a note.)

And Watson.

WATSON. Holmes?

HOLMES. Bring your revolver.

WATSON. *(To us.)* Within seconds, Holmes was in his chair, eyes closed, with his knees drawn under his chin, and I knew when he entered such a profound state, that I could have set off a bomb in the fireplace and he wouldn't have noticed. *Taxi...taxi!*

(And we're on the street.)

Scene Three: On Baker Street in the Rain

(Two cockney lads of about fourteen appear out of nowhere. They're cheerful, resourceful, and competitive.)

CARTWRIGHT. Hello, Doctor. No need to yell.

MILKER. We can get ya a taxi in seconds.

WATSON. Cartwright. Milker. How on earth did you know I'd be here?

CARTWRIGHT. I dunno. I've got this kind o' sixth sense where you and Mr. 'Olmes is concerned.

MILKER. I think me friend 'ere is whatcha call paranormal.

CARTWRIGHT. No, I'm not. I'm exotic.

MILKER. Freaky.

CARTWRIGHT. Prophetic.

MILKER. Peculiar.

CARTWRIGHT. Telepathic.

MILKER. Insane.

WATSON. Enough! We have a job for you.

CARTWRIGHT. Is it dangerous?

WATSON. Yes.

MILKER. Excellent.

CARTWRIGHT. Now I'll get ya that taxi ya wanted.

MILKER. *I'll* get it.

CARTWRIGHT. I said I'll do it.

MILKER. I'll do it faster.

CARTWRIGHT. Oh sure, you wish.

MILKER. Me da has a taxi.

CARTWRIGHT. Me ma has a carriage.

MILKER. And I've got a yacht.

CARTWRIGHT. And I got a balloon, two battleships and half an army!

WATSON. *Boys, that's enough!*

(To us.) On the way to the station, we stopped at Mrs. Gasner's Newsagents, Dry Goods, and Sundries and picked up the items that Holmes requested –

(The door opens with the tinkle of a bell.
MRS. GASNER *is efficiency itself and carries a clipboard.)*

MRS. GASNER. Come in, come in and state your business.
Do not shilly-shally with a lot of nonsense, I'm a busy woman.

CARTWRIGHT. A quart o' paraffin.

MRS. GASNER. It's on the shelf.

MILKER. A wick.

MRS. GASNER. To the left.

CARTWRIGHT. And an empty bottle that holds exactly eight and a quarter ounces o' liquid when it's filled, not more nor less!

(Bang! There it is.)

MRS. GASNER. Would you like to measure it, dearie, or take my word for it?

MILKER. Ha!

(The boys start to go.)

MRS. GASNER. Ah-ah. Say the magic words.

MILKER & CARTWRIGHT. Thank you.

MRS. GASNER. Not those magic words, dearies. The ones that go “Here is your money *and I’m not going to stiff you for a change!*” We respectable women require a certain amount of upkeep, and don’t you forget it.

CARTWRIGHT. Sorry.

MILKER. Sorry.

(They pay and leave.)

WATSON. We left Gasner’s and arrived at King’s Cross Station right on time. I could see Holmes on the platform waiting for us, and even at a distance I could tell that his eyes were ablaze with new purpose.

CONDUCTOR. *(Voiceover.) All aboard for Cambridge, stopping at Epping, Harlow and Great Shelford.*

Scene Four: Platform Nine at King's Cross Station

CARTWRIGHT. 'Allo, Mr. 'Olmes.

MILKER. It's good to see ya!

HOLMES. Cartwright. Milker.

*(A rude **PORTER** bustles past pushing a trolley.)*

PORTER. Porter! Porter! I'm comin' through!

CARTWRIGHT. Hey, be careful!

MILKER. Watch yer step!

*(The **PORTER** growls back.)*

CARTWRIGHT. So what's the case, Mr. Holmes?

HOLMES. The *case* is to listen to me very carefully. The doctor and I will be in Carriage Seven, Compartment Two, and Cartwright, I want you to patrol the carriage but remain invisible –

CARTWRIGHT. “Invisible.”

HOLMES. And if anyone suspicious comes near my compartment, call out loudly. Do not approach him, he is likely to be extremely dangerous.

CARTWRIGHT. Yes sir.

MILKER. And what do *I* do, sir?

HOLMES. You will travel to the town of Grantchester outside Cambridge by a separate train, then double back to this address. Then at two o'clock precisely – do you hear me? –

MILKER. Two o'clock precisely!

HOLMES. – you will start a fire in the grate in the kitchen.

MILKER. You mean to cook the supper, sir?

HOLMES. No, to burn the house down.

MILKER & CARTWRIGHT. *All right!*

HOLMES. Did you stop at Gasner's?

CARTWRIGHT. Yes, sir. And we got them accessorieties
you asked for.

MILKER. Paraffin.

CARTWRIGHT. Done.

MILKER. Wick.

CARTWRIGHT. Done.

MILKER. And an empty bottle. Are you makin' a table lamp?

HOLMES. No, a bomb.

MILKER & CARTWRIGHT. *Yes!*

("Oweeeee!")

CONDUCTOR. *(Voiceover.) All aboard!*

*(Chuggachuggachuggachuggachugga
chugga.)*

Scene Five: Aboard the Train

WATSON. (*To us.*) Within a few minutes I found myself in the corner of our compartment, flying along en route to Great Shelford, while Sherlock Holmes, his sharp, eager face framed in his traveling cap, brooded in the opposite corner. As it turned out, it was one of the most important discussions of our lives.

HOLMES. ...Watson. I assume that you have never heard of Professor James Moriarty.

WATSON. Never.

HOLMES. And that is the genius of the man. He pervades London and no one has heard of him. That is what puts him on a pinnacle in the history of crime.

WATSON. Crime?

HOLMES. I tell you Watson, in all seriousness, if I could beat the man, I would gladly sacrifice myself in the process.

WATSON. Holmes, really... What has he done?

HOLMES. His career has been remarkable. At the age of twenty he wrote a treatise on the Binomial Theorem and had the Chair of Mathematics at Cambridge just two years later. But it turned out that he had tendencies of a criminal nature. Dark rumors gathered round him at the university and eventually he was compelled to leave.

WATSON. You weren't there at the time...?

HOLMES. Indeed I was. He was my mentor, and I worshipped him. We worked together, we dined together, we were as inseparable as Juno's swans. Then the rumors began and he started avoiding me. It was said that he'd committed the most atrocious crimes, all for money.

WATSON. That's monstrous.

HOLMES. At first I refused to believe it. But then one day I was in his office, and I found a letter in his handwriting. He was blackmailing another professor for his indiscretions.

WATSON. Good God.

HOLMES. He wanted money and he threatened violence. I was going to go to the police with the letter, but I... I hesitated. I convinced myself I needed more evidence. The truth is, I didn't want to confront him. I loved him and I was frightened of him.

WATSON. Of course you were. Anyone would have been.

HOLMES. I delayed for a week, and then I found it. *Proof after proof.* But alas, by the time I sought him out, he had fled. He got away! And it was my fault!

WATSON. Oh, come now. You can't blame yourself!

HOLMES. Oh I can. And then came the scandal, but it was too late. He was gone because of *me*. Because of my cowardice! Shortly after that, I received a letter, and in it, he admitted all he had done. He swore he would build an empire upon extortion, forgery, murder, anything to acquire power and wealth.

At that moment, I knew my calling. I would become a detective to stop such villainy and atone for my lack of courage. So oddly enough, it was Moriarty who made me what I have tried to become. *But I should have stopped him from the beginning and I failed to do it!*

WATSON. So stop him now. Track him down and have him arrested.

HOLMES. I have tried, Watson. He remains invisible. And yet, he is the seed of all that is evil in our great city. He sits motionless like a spider in the center of its web, and he knows the quiver of every thread. *He is the Napoleon of Crime!*

WATSON. But what can you do? You need him to slip.

HOLMES. Aha. Yes. I do. *And I think he has.*

WATSON. How?

HOLMES. *(His eyes gleam with a new light.) The King's letters. We are on to him early on this one. And it is just possible if we move quickly we can stop him forever. Now listen carefully, I have a plan.*

*(As they huddle together, we see **CARTWRIGHT** patrolling the corridor. After a beat, a **VICAR** with a clerical collar enters, engrossed in a crossword puzzle.)*

VICAR. Seven down. A three-letter palindrome denoting surprise.

(Showing him the puzzle.)

CARTWRIGHT. Wow.

VICAR. "Wow."

(Writing it down.)

Oh very good. Well done, young man.

*(He exits, passing the **PORTER** we met on the platform.)*

PORTER. Porter! Porter! I'm comin' through!

CARTWRIGHT. Oy. 'Ow's business?

PORTER. What's it to you?

CARTWRIGHT. You was the porter in the station, remember?
But wait a sec. I thought porters stayed *in* the station,
so what're ya doin' here in the -...

*(Just as **CARTWRIGHT** realizes the implications of this: Wham! The **PORTER** slams **CARTWRIGHT** against the window and starts to strangle him.)*

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