

BASKERVILLE:
An Immersive Sherlock Holmes Mystery
By Grace Atherholt & Gabrielle Dina

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gabriellerbdina@gmail.com
(717) 435-3516

Cast of Characters (in order of appearance):

Dr. John Watson - British man, late 30's-early 40's. RP dialect. The undervalued side-kick, finally given his chance to self-actualize into Holmes' image. Think Jude Law's portrayal, then add a sprinkle of Martin Freeman's Bilbo Baggins for whimsicality. Watson is an author at heart, but despite his flair for the dramatic, he's determined to write himself into the role of detective. He'd succeed, too - if it was his name on the title page.

Mrs. Mary Watson - British woman, late 20's-early 40's. RP dialect. The new wife. Always third wheel on the Holmes & Watson bandwagon, Mary sees this case as a chance to assert herself. While she begins unsure of her abilities, she'll prove her mettle and keen observational skills by the end.

Detective James Mortimer - American man, late 20's-late 30's. Pittsburgh accent. The outsider. A clean cop from a dirty city, he sees the world in terms of stark black and white. Won't stop until he gets the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Is hiding a tragic backstory of unrealized love?

Sir Henry Baskerville - American man, late 20's-late 30's. Western Dialect. The heir. Was out West working as a rancher before he travelled back East. Rugged and stubborn, but also "sickly." Think lumberjack Doc Holliday. Serious, but with a comedic bent. ACTOR IS CROSS CAST AS JACK STAPLETON.

Eliza Barrymore - American woman, Pennsylvania-Dutch, early 40's-late 60's. Local dialect. Knows the old Baskerville legend, and knows even more about the mischief that's going on in the woods. Prone to theatrics and hysterics, but has a backbone of ruthless steel. Speaks to her dead husband as though he's still in the flesh. CROSS CAST AS POLICEMAN.

Jack Stapleton - British man, late 20's-late 30's. Obviously fake voice with an unmistakable Western accent. The spare? A fish out of water, very painfully aware that his carefully laid plans are quickly unravelling before his eyes.

Beryl Stapleton - American woman, Latina heritage, late 20's-late 30's. Western Dialect. The mysterious figure in the woods, and the lynchpin to solving the case. Although Watson tries to frame her as a demure victim, she is fierce, outspoken, and intelligent - the brains and the force of will behind the whole plan. CROSS CAST AS POLICEMAN.

Sherlock Holmes: British man, late 30's-early 40's. RP dialect/local dialect. The Old Man. A bohemian who lives outside of the expectations and strictures of the Victorian era, he's the only character who is 100% aware of the fourth-wall - and breaks it with glee. Reveals himself at the end of the play to correctly solve the case - because it *is* his name on the title page. Later, reveals his softer side to Watson when he gives his friend words of encouragement. ACTOR IS CROSS CAST AS OLD MAN.

Time: Present day for the tour group. Early 1890's for the actors.

Place: Mount Gretna, PA

Set Requirements: Most of this play is meant to be performed outside as a walking tour, with each scene at a new location. Speakers are a must, lights are less important. The “theatre” at the end of the play can be a temporarily raised platform, an amphitheater, a set of large steps, etc. During Scene 6, seating for the audience is highly encouraged.

Prop List (as appears in script):

- Candle
- Lantern
- Bloodstained Handkerchief
- Portrait/Locket of John Barrymore. (or perhaps an urn?)
- A pair of man's boots
- Dog leash
- Shadowbox with Butterfly Inside
- Pot of Phosphorous
- Beryl's Shotgun (or other type of weapon)
- Butterfly net
- Flask

Notes for Actors & Performance:

- *Stage Directions*
- *(Personal stage directions for a specific actor.)*
- [A line that the actor should say verbatim, treated as an aside.] Or: [an example of what the OLD MAN should say.]
- Slashes mean that / actors should be speaking on top of one another.

Workshop History:

- August 2025 – Workshop with Lancaster Dramaticists Platform

Notes to Directors:

On Location of Production:

This script was written for a specific venue, and as such, it is meant to be hyper-local to its performed location. You are absolutely encouraged to change any lines that refer to regional places, businesses, geography or attractions. Likewise, the accents of the American characters (with the exception of Baskerville) should reflect the immediate location, history and diversity of your community.

Likewise, the exact cities or states all American characters are from should be tailored to what makes sense for your location. I.e. if you are located in Montana, then Baskerville should not also be from Montana.

On Costuming:

All characters should be dressed in 1890's period dress, with the slight exception of Holmes.

Sherlock Holmes: He should wear a modern outer layer (probably a fall/winter coat or jacket) overtop his period Holmes attire. Maybe even a scarf or large hat to hide the face. However, the outer layer should be easy to cast aside. If Holmes can pull out a pipe and deerstalker after the transformation, even better.

Baskerville/Stapleton: To make the change easiest from Stapleton back into Baskerville during the Scene 6 reveal, Stapleton should be the character that wears a false beard. If possible, the full beard and/or sideburns can be taken off, but Baskerville retains the signature cowboy moustache.

On “the Heckler” aka the OLD MAN:

The Old Man should be vaguely obnoxious, sometimes cracking bad jokes that he just *can't* keep to himself, sometimes being downright ornery and rude. The script has been marked with several places where he could interject, but directors are encouraged to add him in at their discretion - without overutilizing the mechanic! The actor should speak in a contemporary way that feels most natural to him. It should not read as a Victorian character pretending to be a modern-day person.

Scene 1

Audience gathers in an area with a “TOUR STARTS HERE” sign (with times on it) WATSON and MARY approach the group arm in arm. OLD MAN has already been in the crowd.

WATSON

What’s this, Mary? Seems like a tour is happening. [*examines the sign*] Ah, we’ve made it just in time for the final tour of the night!

MARY

Odd that tours should be happening, given what dangers we’ve been told of?

WATSON

Quiet dear, we don’t want to frighten these people. Besides, given that we’ve just arrived, this could be a good way to get a feel for the area.

MARY

But don’t you think we should try to find –

She is cut off by a SOUND EFFECT: A haunting and unearthly howl. SHERIFF MORTIMER and two Policemen (BERYL and ELIZA in costume?) run towards the group

WATSON

What on earth was that?

MARY

Oh God, John, I’ve never heard anything like it - //

MORTIMER

// Who are all of you people? What on earth are you doing here?! Damn it all! Spread out, men, and canvas the area. Find the source of that ungodly sound! Please, ladies and gentleman, you are not safe here! You must all leave now!

The Policemen split off running in different directions and SHERIFF MORTIMER goes to follow when WATSON stops him.

WATSON

I say, Sir. Are you in charge here?

MORTIMER

More or less, I s'pose. Sheriff Mortimer, at your service.

WATSON

Actually, sir, I'm here to offer you *my* services! Dr. John Watson, and this is my wife, Mary.

We've just arrived from Philadelphia. (*a beat as SHERIFF MORTIMER looks confused*) I'm the associate of Sherlock Holmes?

MORTIMER

Oh, thank God. You've arrived at quite a timely hour. I assume this means Sherlock Holmes has come with you? Where is he?

WATSON

Ah, I'm afraid Mr. Holmes is still tied up with the case he was assisting on in Philadelphia.

Nevertheless, he's instructed me to begin this investigation, reporting back the facts as I find them - to be his eyes and ears, as it were.

MORTIMER

I see. If I'd been in need of a biographer instead of a world-famous consulting detective, I'm sure I would have included that in my telegram.

MARY

Sheriff Mortimer! I assure you - my husband is more than qualified to consult on this case. Why, he's been of the utmost assistance to Mr. Holmes on *hundreds* of occasions -

WATSON

/I wouldn't say *hundreds*-/

MARY

-*AND*, I'd daresay that he's developed his own keen powers of deduction that could rival any Pinkerton or private eye in your nation. Frankly, Sheriff Mortimer, you'd be lucky to have my husband's aid.

WATSON

Ehrm, thank you, Mary.

MORTIMER

(*Sighs*) You're right. I'm in no position to turn my nose up at any sort of help. Especially when cracking this case open is proving to be so wicked difficult. Well, sir, there's no time to waste. I'm sure you heard that horrible sound just now, and the culprit behind it may yet be caught red-handed! But these people cannot stay here!

MARY

My husband and I can see to their safety. It seems too dangerous for them to wander out on their own now.

MORTIMER

Yes, that's probably for the best - what, with a convicted murderer on the loose and this blasted hound//

OLD MAN

[Interjection of concern and/or derision. Possibly trying to start a loud conversation with other audience members.]

MORTIMER

(*Speaking over OLD MAN, trying to get the show back on the road.*) Oh, yes. My deepest apologies, I should have warned you all right away: an inmate by the name of Selden - perhaps better known as the Knotting Hill murderer - has escaped from York Penitentiary; he's been recently spotted in this area. Although it's reported that he's weak and sickly, Selden should be considered highly dangerous. Everyone should stay inside for their safety - in fact, these tours were to be canceled!

OLD MAN

[derogatory interjection of some kind, maybe like = "I don't think so, I *paid* for this tour."]

WATSON

Please, sir! I understand your concern. Ladies and gentleman, this tour must be put on hold for now. But please, let us all stay together until this situation has been taken care of. (*to SHERIFF MORTIMER*) Speaking of which - I think it best if you tell us all exactly what is going on here, Sheriff. I must say, your telegram left much to the imagination.

MORTIMER

Right. This all started about a month ago; I was given an unexpected promotion from Detective to Sheriff, and was sent here all the way from the city of Pittsburgh. No, don't congratulate me - I don't like liars or grifters, Dr. Watson, and I was running into too many who were all on the mob's doll. This was simply a way for my superiors to shut me up and get me out of the way. So at first, I was almost relieved - here, at last, was a chance for me to get away from the corruption, and uphold the law in an honest, law-abiding town!

Instead, I arrived here on the eve of the death of Sir Charles Baskerville, and promptly found all my hopes were to be dashed.

WATSON

Sir Charles Baskerville - a wealthy scion of these parts, I imagine.

MORTIMER

You're right on the money. And speaking of money - Baskerville was the richest man this side of the Susquehanna. (*Gesturing to the forest*) He practically owned this entire mountain. And as I said - on the eve of my arrival into Mount Gretna, Sir Charles Baskerville was found dead on his estate - from an unexpected heart attack.

WATSON

A heart attack seems simple enough. (*pause*) But you have reason to suspect foul play?

MORTIMER

...Several reasons, though they may be difficult to elucidate. The police department is small here, and they weren't expecting me to arrive so soon, so it took precious time to get a read on what was happening. When I found my way to Baskerville Hall, the man had been dead for several hours. His body had already been removed, and the scene was surrounded by people. The doctor, the coroner, law enforcement - even the civilian townsfolk! They were milling about by the gate, gawking to see the gravel pathway outside where the body had been found!

Once I managed to secure the perimeter and establish a semblance of order; I began to piece together what occurred. Sir Charles Baskerville was taking a leisurely stroll down the north garden path, as he was wont to do in the evenings, but then his footprints changed. Looked like he turned heel to go back towards the Hall, and instead of prints from the whole of his foot, the only ones I could find looked like just the balls of his feet. As though he was running - desperately running, running until he burst his heart and fell dead upon his face. I began to expand my search outward, looking for any clue as to what he was running from, when I found them, some twenty yards from the body but still on the path, almost perfectly formed - the gigantic footprints of an enormous hound!

MARY

...enormous, you say?

MORTIMER

Almost incredibly so.

WATSON

But it had not approached the body?

MORTIMER

No. (*Pause*) I was the only one who noticed the print.

WATSON

And you said nothing of this discovery to anyone?

MORTIMER

No good could have come from it if I had. Turns out, Dr. Watson that half the police force - no, half the town! - was already convinced that Sir Charles Baskerville had succumbed to the Baskerville family curse! Everyone I spoke to that night swore up and down that his soul was dragged down to hell by a great big, black - *supernatural* hound!

MARY

I beg your pardon? A - supernatural hound?

MORTIMER

Oh yes. The detectives, the doctor, the coroner - they pay lip service to rationality. The official cause of death is listed as a myocardial infarction, brought on by a great stress to the system - but I've heard them talking amongst themselves! They truly seem to believe in this old legend about a family curse that has struck down yet another Baskerville. And that's not the worst part. If this town is plagued by some kind of hysteria, then it's one that's contagious, for I've seen proof of this monstrous creature, with my very own eyes!

WATSON

Surely, not this paw print?

MARY

Perhaps there are surrounding houses that have hounds, or sheep-dogs that could have made such a print?

MORTIMER

No, no, I've checked all the surrounding houses in the area, and I've found no dogs even remotely large enough to make the prints I saw that night. It was something else, and you must believe that I do not admit it lightly.

Three nights after the death of Sir Baskerville, I found myself unable to sleep; this infernal case plagued my mind! So by moonlight I returned to Baskerville Hall, to revisit the scene of the crime. I was retracing Sir Charles' steps down the garden path when I happened to look up. That's when I saw it, upon the hill, with my very own eyes - a giant black hound, its mouth aglow, and its terrible eyes wreathed in unholy flame!

(Beat)

I saw it for only a moment. It disappeared into the trees, and was swallowed up by the forest.

Beat. Possible SOUND EFFECT.

WATSON

That is...highly peculiar. And you swear you saw this beast?

MORTIMER

As clearly as I see you, Dr. Watson. And in the exact same likeness as the other townsfolk have testified. You yourself heard that unearthly sound just now. *(Beat)* So you see why I asked for the great Sherlock Holmes. I fear only a mind as brilliant as his will be able to cut through the miasma of superstition I find myself surrounded by. I consider myself to be a rational man, Dr. Watson - so for the life of me, I cannot simply accept that one of the citizens under my jurisdiction has been reaped by a fantastical hell-beast! I refuse to believe in such nonsense! There *must* be some scheme or plot involved in this affair. Someone must gain *something* by this man's death - my gut-instinct tells me that this is foul-play.

WATSON

Intuition is oftentimes the fool's lantern that leads one astray.

MORTIMER

(wryly) Very true. But every man is a hypocrite in his own unique ways, Doctor. And I'll have you know - not once has my intuition ever steered me wrong. Mark my words: something is going on in this little town. And not everything is as it appears.

One of the Policemen comes running back to the group.

POLICEMAN

Sheriff! Sheriff! Come quickly - we've found a body!

MORTIMER

Good God. Whose body?

POLICEMAN

Well, we didn't...it looks sort of like...

MORTIMER

Spit it out man!

POLICEMAN

Sir Baskerville, Sir.

MORTIMER

No!

MARY

Sir Baskerville? I thought he was dead already?

MORTIMER

His nephew and heir, Sir Henry, has been staying in the Manor. We must go examine this body at once!

WATSON

You go along first, Sheriff. I think it unwise for all of us to accompany you to this crime scene. Is there a safe place this group could go?

MORTIMER

Right, right. It may be best if you go to Baskerville Hall. It's just down that way. But surely, Dr. Watson, you would want to examine this body as well?

(Dr. Watson hesitates a moment looking at Mary and the Audience)

MARY

Go! We'll be alright.

WATSON

I'm terribly sorry, Mary. If I'd known how dangerous this case might be-

MARY

Dr. Watson, I wouldn't have married you if I didn't have a certain fondness for danger. And you know, I've had quite enough of you and Holmes having adventures without me; it's time I assert myself. *We* are going to solve this case *together*, Dr. John Watson.

WATSON

(Embarrassed) Oh, well, Mary-dear, I hardly think that my detective skills will be enough to-

MARY

Ah, ah! No more of that dreadful self-doubt. I have faith in your abilities, John. It's high-time you do the same. Now off you go!

(SHERIFF MORTIMER and WATSON run off together.)

MARY

(nervously) Well, I suppose we shouldn't stand here so exposed. Come with me, ladies and gentleman, this way! Quickly!

SCENE 2

MARY leads the group to ELIZA BARRYMORE'S cottage. Eliza can be seen standing near a lit candle, looking out into the dark forest. She does not see the tour group approaching.

MARY

Oh dear, this doesn't look right. I'm afraid we're terribly lost. *(calling out to Eliza)* Hallo there, Madam!

ELIZA jumps/shrieks in fright, before hastily extinguishing the candle.

ELIZA

You scared the living daylight out of me, you did. Oh, and look at all of them, John! What are you doing out here? Don't you know there's a dangerous criminal on the loose?

MARY

Yes, we've just heard. We're trying to reach Baskerville Hall, but I'm not familiar with the area. We're rather turned around. Would you be able to point us in the right direction?

ELIZA

It's in that direction, straight ahead. Oh, but that *is* a good question, John - what business do you lot have with Sir Henry Baskerville?

MARY

No business at all. We're simply looking for shelter, Mrs -?

ELIZA

Eliza Barrymore. You must forgive me, but I cannot offer you any shelter, myself. There's - too many of you!

MARY

I understand Mrs. Barrymore. But perhaps we could simply rest awhile—

ELIZA

No, certainly not! There is no room! (*Pause.*) But, where are my manners? Perhaps I could at least fetch you all some tea?/

MARY

/That's quite alright; I suppose we should be getting on. (*Beat*) I must ask, since you live so close - did you know Sir Charles Baskerville in life?

ELIZA

Oh, yes I did - that rotten, nasty man. Never a kind word for anybody. A downright scrooge with his money. Oh, but I shouldn't speak ill of the dead, now - isn't that right, John?

MARY

...John?

ELIZA

My dear husband [God rest his soul!] He used to be the groundskeeper of the Manor, you know, until, well –

MARY

Until what?

ELIZA

Until Sir Charles found out about my - *relations*. He was a very narrow-minded man, that Baskerville. After that he wasn't too happy having my John around the house. Gave him the boot, he did.

MARY

Because of your relations? Why –

ELIZA

Oh, that's not important. What's important was that he was a bitter, bigoted old man. Even put that nasty bit into his will, didn't he?

MARY

Put what into his will?

ELIZA

Some sort of disinheritance clause he called it - should Sir Charles' heir marry beneath his class, he'd no longer inherit anything! Old-fashioned coot.

MARY

And how do you know this?

ELIZA

Well, my dear John [God rest his soul!] was one of his witnesses. Besides, Sir Charles didn't exactly keep it quiet, always going on about how he would keep the name of Baskerville from getting dirtied after he'd kicked it. *(To JOHN)* Oh, no, no, I'll say what I like. Why you insisted on defending him, I'll never understand. Even after he treated you so horribly. *(To MARY)* No, he deserved what he got, that old Baskerville. Mark my words, it was the Hound that did him in - as comeuppance for his evil deeds. Just like his ancestors.

MARY

...the Hound, you say? Mrs. Barrymore, I've heard of this legend but it occurs to me that I don't actually know what it is.

ELIZA

(shudders) A ghastly tale, it is, one that I'm loathe to recount to you. *(Dramatic moment, before she eagerly launches herself into storytelling mode.)* It goes back to Sir Charles' great-great-great-great grandfather, [or was it an uncle?] Hugo Baskerville. He was a horrible man, known for his debaucherous parties, and his wanton, cruel humor. Well, there was a local

maiden that Hugo had set his eyes on. One dark, foggy night, Hugo Baskerville and his friends thought it would be a lark to kidnap her and lock her up in Baskerville Hall. While they were downstairs, scheming and carousing, the girl bravely escaped and fled into the forest - the Chautauqua being much less occupied in those days, of course. Unfortunately it wasn't long before Baskerville discovered her gone. They say he was so enraged it was as if he was possessed by the Devil. He sprang upon the great table in the dining hall, and cried aloud before his company, that he would that very night "render his body and soul to the Powers of Evil if he might but overtake the wench." He then un-kenned his pack of hounds, mounted his horse, and they flew off through the Chautauqua to hunt her down. When his companions finally followed in fear that he might kill the girl, they found the pack of hounds, huddled and whimpering at the edge of a clearing. Then they came upon the body of the girl where she had collapsed, dead from fear and exhaustion. But the worst horror was some yards away, where the body of Hugo Baskerville lay clawed and bloodied, and standing over him - a great, black beast. Shaped like a hound but bigger than any man had ever seen. Even as they watched, it tore out Hugo's throat, then turned its dripping jaws and blazing eyes upon them. They all cried out in terror and fled, riding for their lives. One of the party died that very night because of what he'd seen. It is said this hellhound was brought upon Baskerville as retribution for his evil ways, and it has plagued the Baskerville line ever since - cursing them all to the same grim fate should they stray into the woods at night.

Beat.

MARY

Goodness.

ELIZA

As I said, a ghastly tale.

MARY

And it is this...er...*hellhound*, that you believe killed Sir Charles Baskerville?

ELIZA

Of course it was. He was the same way as that Hugo ancestor of his, with that poor maid he accosted...although at least *she* survived...

MARY

A maid? Do you remember her name?

ELIZA

Laura...Laura Lyons. A sweet girl. Fled out of the state after the incident, poor thing, back to her family. She deserved better. (*With fire*) Dead or not, I'll say it: that Sir Charles was a horrible man. Still, even he knew better than to wander too far at night. He feared the hound, he did. His terror grew worse, the older he got. Told my dear John several times, near the end there, that he'd sworn he'd seen its blazing eyes amongst the trees. Felt sure it was after him.

MARY

And Sir Henry? Do you believe him to be in danger as well?

ELIZA

Oh, poor Henry. The kindest Baskerville to ever set foot in that old Hall, and under such horrible circumstances. But a curse is a curse. He'd be wise to stay indoors at night, to be sure.

MARY

Well, this has been most enlightening. Thank you for speaking with us, Mrs. Barrymore. This information is invaluable.

ELIZA

Certainly, Mrs...?

MARY

Mary Watson. Very recently married to Dr. John Watson. (*proudly*) Perhaps you've heard of him? He's the esteemed chronicler of an internationally renowned detective - Mr. Sherlock Holmes!

ELIZA

Oh! Oh, goodness me. I probably shouldn't have told you all that.

MARY

(distracted by something in the woods) Look! There's a lantern - why, it's headed in the direction of Baskerville Hall! Everyone quickly, follow that light!

Audience begins to follow BERYL holding a lantern, who will guide the group to Location 3.

ELIZA

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear...John, what *have* we done?

SCENE 3

MARY and audience arrive at Baskerville Hall at the same time as Dr. Watson.

WATSON

Mary! Thank God you're safe!

MARY

Quickly, John - where did she go?

WATSON

Who?

MARY

The lady! The one I followed here! She carried a lantern with her.

WATSON

I saw no one. Very strange. But are you alright, dear? I nearly beat you here!

MARY

I'm fine. We stopped to ask directions from a local. She was married to the former groundskeeper, and turned out to be a wealth of knowledge on the Hound legend. Although, looking back - she acted *very* strangely. It was *almost* like she was signalling to someone in the woods...But what about you, John? The body?

WATSON

Right. Well, it *wasn't* Sir Henry Baskerville - Sheriff Mortimer has assured me of that. The dead man we found was thin and sickly, as though he'd long been exposed to the elements - but I ruled the cause of death as consumption. And strangest of all - the poor wretch was wearing the clothes of a very wealthy man! That's where the initial confusion stemmed from. But it would seem Sir Baskerville himself remains unharmed.

MARY

And speak of the devil...

SIR HENRY BASKERVILLE has appeared on his front porch. He seems to be very agitated, as though he's just been told terrible news. WATSON and MARY approach BASKERVILLE.

WATSON

Good evening, Sir! I say - do you have the honor of being Sir Henry Baskerville?

BASKERVILLE

Yes, Sir. 'Though honor ain't got much to do with it, I reckon. And you are?

WATSON

Doctor John Watson, and this is my wife, Mary. Now Sir, you may be wondering why we've called upon / you this evening-

BASKERVILLE

/ Now wait a dog-gone minute - you're not the same Watson who works as the publicist for that detective Sherlock Holmes?!

MARY: Well done, husband. / **WATSON:** I wouldn't say I'm his *publicist*, necessarily-

BASKERVILLE

That meddling man! Sheriff Mortimer set you up to this, didn't he? I told him that I was to have no part in this ridiculousness - [*breaks into a slight cough*].

MARY

We came of our own accord. But frankly, Sir, the Sheriff's worried for you. Contrary to what you might have heard from the coroner, Sheriff Mortimer doesn't believe that your predecessor died from natural causes.

BASKERVILLE

So you're tellin' me it wasn't a heart attack that killed the old man?

WATSON

Well, it *was* - but there may be reason to believe that this heart attack was brought on by foul play, or - or an ambush of some kind. If I may ask you, Sir - is there anyone who may have wished Sir Charles ill?

BASKERVILLE

"Wished him ill?" Ha! Why don't you try the whole of Mount Gretna?

WATSON

Pardon?

BASKERVILLE

From my understanding of things, not many people 'round these parts liked him at all. For good reason, too: he was the worst sort of philanderer. So if you're tryin'na hustle yourselves up a suspect for his 'supposed' murder, well - you got your work cut out for you.

MARY

I've just heard something similar, in regards to your uncle: I imagine he preyed on more women than just Laura Lyons.

WATSON

A possible suspect?

MARY

No, Eliza Barrymore said she fled back to her family. (*Beat.*) But Eliza also mentioned something about a stipulation Sir Charles put into his will - the one about an heir not marrying outside of their class? Perhaps you could elaborate?

BASKERVILLE

(shocked that she knows this)...it's just as she told you, I suppose. 'Course, the clause don't affect *me* in the least. But I won't be much use to you, Mrs. Watson - me and my great-uncle weren't hardly close at all. I barely know a thing about him. What I *do* know is that he lived a debaucherous lifestyle. I wouldn't be surprised in the slightest if his indulgences in life finally caught up with him.

WATSON

...A life of over-excess could certainly have contributed to the man's untimely death, yes.

BASKERVILLE

Well, then there you have it. Sometimes, the simplest explanation to a mystery turns out to be the truth.

WATSON

Occam's Razor.

BASKERVILLE

What now?

WATSON

What you just said is known as the principle of parsimony, or: Occam's Razor - the precept that the simplest, most elegant explanation is usually the one closest to the truth.

MARY

...however, Sherlock Holmes doesn't subscribe to that theory, does he? He says something else entirely.

WATSON

Right you are, Mary! Holmes does not take for granted that the simplest explanation is the correct one; in fact, the opposite has often proved true. This is why my friend has coined his own

axiom: “When you have eliminated the *impossible*, whatever remains, however *improbable* - must be the truth!”

(*Beat.*) ...Which, incidentally, leads us to why we’ve called upon you this evening. Sir Baskerville, let me ask you this - in the short time that you’ve occupied this manor, have you witnessed any...unusual wildlife around the area?

BASKERVILLE

I wouldn’t say so. The odd bobcat, sure. But hardly anything larger than that: the wolves and pumas are near extinct in these parts.

WATSON

...I see. (*Beat.*) I only ask because we have numerous reports that, on the night Sir Charles Baskerville died, a large black hound was seen on the grounds of the estate. A hound that, if we are to believe the witness wholeheartedly, had both eyes and mouth alight with flame.

MARY

And what’s more, there’ve been multiple witnesses of such a creature, still stalking the woods of Mount Gretna. Whatever folly that began with the death of Sir Charles Baskerville is certainly not over-!

BASKERVILLE

I have to stop you right there: all this sounds like superstitious nonsense, to me. In fact, it sounds exactly like that darn family legend that everyone round here is so keyed up about. My daddy left all that nonsense behind when he moved out west. I’ve resolved myself to do the same.

WATSON

That may well be true. But if there *is* even the slightest possibility that someone here *does* wish your family harm, I would think you’d be eager to uncover the culprit!

BASKERVILLE

Oh, *I think* it hardly matters at this point, Doctor - when I’m not long for this world, anyhow.

WATSON

I beg your pardon?

BASKERVILLE

You heard it right. I'm dyin'.

WATSON

May I ask what afflicts you?

BASKERVILLE

Sure thing. It ain't no secret. (*Beat.*) Consumption.

[**OLD MAN** // A lot of that going around lately.]

I contracted it out west - woulda stayed there where the air is better if it weren't for my uncle's own poor health. It was just darn bad luck that my lungs got worse. (*Dry chuckle.*) Perhaps there's some truth to your mythical hell-hound, after all. If the Baskerville family is cursed, there ain't nothin' you nor anybody else can do about it - not even the famous Sherlock Holmes.

WATSON

Nevertheless, in good conscience, I fear I cannot give up this investigation - no matter how far-fetched the premises.

BASKERVILLE

(*resigned*) I can see that you're dead-set on this course of action, then. Only, let me say this - I am a sick man, Doctor Watson, with little strength nor time remaining. I'd like to enjoy what bit I do have *in peace*. I ask you not to bother me with this nonsense any longer. In fact, I implore you to give up the matter entirely. All your investigation's gonna do is stir up the fervor of the townspeople. Besides - I would think a man such as yourself - a man of science, a contemporary of Mr. Holmes - would be the last man in the world eager to waste his own time chasing ghost stories.

WATSON

Be that as it may -

Violently interrupted by SOUND EFFECT!!

WATSON and MARY are visibly startled.

MARY

Dear God – it's that sound again!

BASKERVILLE

No need to be alarmed! That sound, it's a - strange but common phenomenon out here - something about how the wind whistles over the lake at night. The sound gets distorted by the trees - (*interrupted by a repeat of the SOUND EFFECT.*)

WATSON

By Jove, that sounds like..why that sounds like the baying of a *hound*! Quickly, now! Which way is it coming from -?

WATSON starts to start in the direction of sound; BASKERVILLE begins to cough violently into a handkerchief, slumping over. When he reveals the fabric to the audience, it is thoroughly stained red.

BASKERVILLE: Doctor! *Doctor* - !

/

MARY: Oh! *John*!

Enter MORTIMER, running wildly.

MORTIMER

My God, did you hear that! This can't be our imaginations! The culprit must be close at hand!

WATSON

Sheriff! What news?

MORTIMER

We've confirmed the identity of the dead man. You'll never guess - it was Selden!

MARY

The escaped convict?

MORTIMER

The very one, dressed up in wool, silk, and velvet!

WATSON

And yet he was hiding out here in the woods all this time, slowly starving to death. One would think that if he were to rob a man, he'd raid the larder before the coat closet!

MARY

Unless the clothes were gifted to him.

WATSON

Who would be mad enough to risk giving aid to an institutionally insane murderer?

MARY

Who indeed? I wonder...the woman I met, Eliza Barrymore. She lived just over-
(*looks into the distance, sees BERYL with the lantern once more.*)

John, look! The lady I told you about, with the lantern? Why, she *must* have just left this very manor!

MORTIMER

She was hiding here, no doubt! There's nothing else out here but wilderness!

BASKERVILLE

(*coughing*) Now, don't be ridiculous -

/

MARY

John! We must apprehend her!

WATSON

I-

Another terrible SOUND EFFECT!!!

BASKERVILLE groans theatrically, stumbles, then faints dead away. For a moment, WATSON is torn: should he stay or should he go?

[**OLD MAN**: Are we gonna follow her, or what?]

WATSON

Sheriff Mortimer, stay here with Sir Baskerville and my wife. Protect them at all costs. I will apprehend this mysterious woman - I sense our narrative is drawing to a close. As Holmes would say: the game's afoot!

WATSON dashes after BERYL and the lantern. MORTIMER and MARY encourage the crowd to follow him. The OLD MAN is being difficult, refusing to leave. MARY and MORTIMER raise their voices, demanding that he follow the tour group.

SCENE 4

Watson and the audience follow BERYL at a distance to the STAPLETON cottage. Somewhere in the middle of the walk, BERYL becomes aware that she is being followed. She disappears for a moment when she reaches the cottage.

WATSON

Quietly now. She must be around here *somewhere*-

BERYL reappears out of the darkness, brandishing a shotgun.

BERYL

If you thought you was sneakin' up on me, Mister, you're highly mistaken. State your business, now.

WATSON

Madam, I mean you no harm-

BERYL

(wracking shotgun) Neither do I. Your intentions, Sir?

WATSON

To ascertain *your* intentions, Madam. Just this evening, I saw you depart from Baskerville Hall. What purpose did you have there?

BERYL

I never-

WATSON

There's no point in lying. We all saw you leave - isn't that right?

OLD MAN

[Yeah! Sure did!]

BERYL

Henry's a dear friend of mine. I was makin' sure he was alright. You...heard they found a body?

WATSON

The criminal, Selden. Although he *was* first mistaken for Sir Baskerville. (*Beat, as he surveys the porch, taking in the items left out: a pair of man's boots, a butterfly net, a leash for an animal, a pot on the windowsill, a butterfly in a shadowbox.*) I don't mean to be forward, Madam, but do you live alone?

BERYL

I certainly do *not*. Jack Stapleton - my brother - he'll be along any moment, now. You best keep that in mind.

WATSON

I only ask because of what I see before me. (*Indicating to the boots, then idly taking up butterfly net*) Why, he has all the makings of an amateur naturalist!

BERYL

That would be *me* who's the naturalist - and I'm hardly an amateur, Dr. Watson.

WATSON

Indeed? Is your work what brought you to Mount Gretna?

BERYL

How do you know I'm not from around here? (*Beat.*) Sure, you could say that. This mountain ecosystem's real unique. Allows for all sorts of wonders.

WATSON

(*picking up shadow box to study it*) So I see. Now, Ms. Stapleton-

STAPLETON comes rushing onto the scene from the back of the cottage, half-dressed in his disguise (mustache askew, coat only on one arm, etc. Whatever helps to make it look like he made a hasty costume change). He starts out with a western accent, which he quickly tries to hide.

STAPLETON

Beryl! Beryl, honey -

/

BERYL

- Jack, we have company.

WATSON

Ah! You must be the aforementioned brother! Jack Stapleton?

STAPLETON nods awkwardly.

BERYL

He's a mute.

WATSON

He spoke just now.

BERYL

He's shy.

WATSON

If he refuses to speak, then I'll be forced to continue interrogating *you*, Madam-

STAPLETON

(Donning a different voice, clearly an awkward act - but unable to completely mask his Western accent.) Leave the lady alone.

WATSON

Another transplant, by the sound of you! How unexpected that I should meet three in one night - and in such a small town! (*Putting the pieces together.*) Although...perhaps not. (*Taking in the dog's leash, dipping his fingers into the pot, smelling them, then licking them. Recognizes the substance, grimaces, and spits.*) Before you interrupted us, Sir, your dear sister was just telling me about her work. (*Gesturing to shadowbox*) A pity, isn't it? To pin something that should be flying free? To confine it to a box, from which it can never rise above? Perhaps you sympathize with this creature? I certainly do...

Interrupted by MORTIMER and MARY, who come running onto the scene. WATSON uses this distraction to disarm BERYL. He holds the STAPLETONS at gunpoint.

WATSON

Great Scott - *Mary!* What are you doing here? Why aren't you watching Sir Baskerville -?

MARY

Oh, John - he ran off like a madman! Dove headlong into the woods, raving about *the hound* as he went! We tried to stop him-!

MORTIMER

Nevermind that! We'll deal with him later! What the devil did *we* just run into?!?

WATSON

A spot of interrogation, nothing more. Sheriff, I believe we have sufficient cause to detain these two. I have reason to believe they are both involved in the murder of Sir Charles Baskerville, and the attempted murder of Sir Henry!

BERYL

I demand to know what grounds you have for detaining us!

WATSON

That will be made known to you presently. (*extending shotgun to MORTIMER*) Sheriff?

MORTIMER

I trust you're right about this, Doctor.

MARY

John-

WATSON

(to MORTIMER) Not to worry, Sheriff, I have everything perfectly under control. *(to MARY)* Perfectly under control, my dear. Now, *(to Audience)* the Sheriff and I need your help in getting these two to the cover of the theatre. Keep your eye on them - don't let them escape! Tonight, we will finally prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Sir Charles Baskerville was murdered in cold blood - and forever put to bed the legend of the Hound of the Baskervilles! Oh, that's a good line, isn't it? Be a dear, Mary, and write that down, will you?

MARY

Good *Lord*, John, at a time like *this*?!

MORTIMER, armed with shotgun, and WATSON, armed with butterfly net, and MARY, armed with Watson's pen, begin to corral the STAPLETONS into the theatre/to the Scene 5 location. Somewhere along the way, ELIZA should join the entourage, ad libbing as she goes.

SCENE 5**WATSON**

Ladies and Gentlemen, if you would take your seats!

MARY helps get people to sit down.

BERYL

Dr. Watson, I demand you tell us what on earth is going on here!

WATSON

Certainly. If I could have everyone's attention!

SHERIFF MORTIMER

Wouldn't it be better to wait for Mr. Holmes – ?

WATSON

No, no, Sheriff - there's no time to waste. It might be days yet before Holmes joins us. However, through the use of his deductive science, I can confidently say this case has made itself clear to me. Now, Sheriff Mortimer, you are correct about there being an evil plan afoot! One intent on claiming the life of not just Sir Charles, but of his heir Sir Henry as well, and all evidence points to *this man* (*pointing to STAPLETON*) Ladies and Gentleman, I submit to you that the man we've just met, Mr. Jack Stapleton, is none other than the illegitimate son of Sir Charles Baskerville!

BERYL

And where is your proof for this - *outlandish* accusation?!

WATSON

Forthcoming, Madam. (*Back to Audience*) We have heard from multiple sources that Sir Charles was a philanderer of the very worst sort. However, he was also a traditionalist. A child resulting from any [ahem] indiscretions would have never been tolerated in his household. His victims would be sent away, with a tidy sum of money to keep their silence.

MARY

(understanding where he's going with this) Laura Lyons was one such unfortunate. Mrs. Barrymore mentioned her!

WATSON

A very likely possibility! As for the identity of the father, it's all too clear, Sir: you bear a striking familial resemblance to Sir Henry Baskerville. No doubt you are the illegitimate progeny of his great Uncle! *(Beat.)* I've no doubt your life has not been an easy one. A young boy, with a disgraced single mother and no father to speak of. At some point, your mother must have divulged who your father was, and only then did you learn of the large fortune he had kept from you - a fortune that should rightfully be yours, should you be able to rise from your station and unpin yourself from the expectations of society. What else, then, could you do but investigate? Upon doing so, you learned your father had only one named heir, a nephew, and your dastardly plan began to form. Should both Sir Charles and Sir Henry perish, and you prove your lineage, the fortune would be yours!

STAPLETON

Dr. Watson, please...*(WATSON holds up a hand to silence him)*

WATSON

You also learned of the legend of the Hound that supposedly haunts the Baskerville line. Well...it was all too easy, then. You simply moved to the area as a friendly neighbor, procuring yourself a dog in the process; the evidence in your cottage speaks to this. A leash to control the animal, bones scattered across the porch - even the substance in the pot that I smelt, then tasted. A phosphorus compound, that you no doubt used to smear around the animals eyes and mouth, to create the unearthly fire we saw.

MARY

Brilliant, John!

WATSON

(feigning humility) Elementary, my dear Mary. After that discovery, my deductions came easily. With Sir Charles' heart already weak, and his paranoia growing, you had only to learn his habits, build his fear. Then, ambush him alone at night, setting the hound upon him - an ordeal which would surely kill him. Once dealt with, his heir, Sir Henry, would be your next target. However, you certainly didn't predict he would receive warning (*turns to BERYL*) from none other than your own wife!

MORTIMER/MARY/ELIZA

Wife?!

BERYL

This is preposterous!

WATSON

Is it, indeed, Madam? We've witnessed you sulking about the woods at night, making the perilous journey there and back again to Baskerville Hall. In your distress for his safety you felt obligated to steal out and warn Sir Henry of the grisly fate Stapleton planned for him. Tremendously brave of you, my dear! But you no longer need fear!

MARY

.....Darling, are you quite sure of all this? That last bit was - rather *fanciful*. We have *no proof* –

WATSON

Ah, but it all makes perfect sense! (*A crazed laugh as he shakes the butterfly net triumphantly*) A spurned illegitimate son out for an inheritance he believes to be rightfully his, capitalizing on a legend of a demon hound to cover his murderous intent. Betrayed by his own wife who fears the evil within him. Why, this could be a novel - it's practically writing itself!

OLD MAN

What about the dead body?

WATSON

(appearing to slightly break character) Excuse me?

OLD MAN

You know - Selden? Why was his body all dressed up? How is that part of the mystery?

WATSON

(genuinely flustered) Selden. *(has no good answer)* Well...I...that isn't really a part of this mystery /

OLD MAN

/ You spent nearly two scenes on the man! He *must* be a part of it!

BERYL

(Jumping on the bandwagon) And where *is* this hound, anyhow? You still haven't shown hide nor hair of any proof!

Other characters start muttering to themselves about the inconsistencies. WATSON, appearing to semi-break character, is fed up.

WATSON

QUIET, ALL OF YOU! *(To everyone, but mostly aimed at characters on stage)* ...And I suppose you all fancy you have some insight that I've missed? Do you think you could do a better job in solving this case?

OLD MAN

Yeah, I think I could.

WATSON

(Gesturing for him to come up to the stage) Well, then, *good Sir*, I entreat you - *go ahead and try!*

OLD MAN

Very well, Watson! Since you have requested it of me - I shall do my utmost best!

Overlapping exclamations from all on stage as OLD MAN sheds his outer layer of clothing, revealing HOLMES underneath in period dress, He springs lithely onto the stage.

WATSON

What in the blazes! - *Holmes*?!

HOLMES

My dear Watson, you didn't think I'd leave you to solve this case on your own, did you? I wouldn't dare miss out on the fun.

WATSON

Well, I – but how?

HOLMES

Never mind that. Your attempt was admirable, Watson, but as I have stated in the past: you *see*, but you do not *observe*. As ever you have overlooked the obvious details that would have signaled the answer to this mystery at once. May I?

Beat, as HOLMES prepares for his coup de grace.

HOLMES

You take issue with the lack of evidence for a dog, Madam, so I shall start there. I made a quick detour, Watson, while you served as a distraction leading this merry band to the Stapletons.

There is a shed along the back of the Baskerville property, deep in the trees, in which I found an impressive black hunting hound. Ramshackle as the building was, the hinges and padlock were brand new, which leads me to deduce that at some point recently it must have escaped, ripping the old metal clean out of the wood. Am I correct in surmising that this happened just before the night of Sir Charles' death, [*to Stapleton*] – Sir Henry?

STAPLETON

I beg your pardon?

HOLMES

Come now, your attempt at disguise is...admirable. But 'the jig is up,' as they say!

WATSON

Holmes, be serious. You can't very well mean –

He is cut off as STAPLETON ashamedly removes his disguise and becomes BASKERVILLE once more.

HOLMES

Hah, a familial resemblance indeed! Surely, Watson, you don't mean to tell me you didn't notice that Sir Baskerville and Mr. Stapleton are the one and very same individual?

WATSON

Well - yes, I suppose I did. [But frankly, I thought it was due to budgetary concerns-???]

HOLMES laughs sharply.

HOLMES

You entertain me, Watson! (*To BASKERVILLE*) Was I indeed correct, Sir Henry?

BASKERVILLE nods

HOLMES

Just as I thought. Knowing your uncle's fear of hounds, you kept yours out of sight. But you were unaware of its escape until that night when, during his nightly walk, Sir Charles happened to see the very thing he feared most amongst the trees. His paranoia getting the best of him, he ran in terror, exacerbating himself to the point at which his heart gave out. Sir Charles' death

was, in the end, of natural causes, the result of a guilty conscience and an ill-timed dog on the loose.

MORTIMER

But I could've sworn I searched everywhere!

HOLMES

Ah, but you never once suspected Sir Henry Baskerville of any mischief - and as such, you never thought to search his *own* property.

MORTIMER

But then why is he parading around as this Jack Stapleton character?

WATSON

Indeed, Holmes. Seems like a pointless scheme if he was innocent of his Uncle's death.

MARY

And Selden? What part did that poor wretch play in all this?

HOLMES

Ah, well, that is all rather straightforward. Remind me again, Mary: what *was* it you learned from Eliza Barrymore about Sir Charles' will?

MARY

There is a clause...about marrying within one's class!

HOLMES

Well done, yes! You were correct, Watson, that Beryl is more to Sir Henry than a friend or sister. But their impending marriage would have forfeited the inheritance, even after Sir Charles' death. I daresay these two were attempting an elaborate con to find their way around such an antiquated stipulation. They created the Stapleton "siblings," intending to wait for Sir Charles' natural

death. After claiming the inheritance, Sir Henry could make his own will and list the Stapletons as his own beneficiaries. They would then fake Sir Henry's death and be off with their fortune, free to be together. But how to fake such a death? A body would be needed, and here Eliza Barrymore helped them in sharing that Selden, the escaped convict, was her brother.

Reactions from all.

ELIZA

How on earth did you guess that?!

HOLMES

Mrs. Barrymore, I am not in the habit of guessing. Before leaving Philadelphia I had been informed of the escaped convict and thought it prudent to look into his file. Your maiden name is Selden, is it not?

ELIZA

It is...indeed, it is.

HOLMES

Despite a difficult journey, Selden inexplicably fled directly here to the Chautauqua, as if knowing there could be sanctuary for him. Which there was, in the home and generous heart of his sister.

ELIZA

I'd...I'd never let him stay in my home, sir. Even if he was my brother, he was an evil man. But...I couldn't let him suffer. He was dreadfully sick, you see.

MARY

(dramatic gasp) The candle! Eliza used it to signal her brother! *(Turning to her)* And you were the one to give him those clothes, as well!

HOLMES

How observant you are proving, Mrs. Watson! Mrs. Barrymore's anxiety upon our arrival was quite obvious. She extinguished the candle quickly, yet consistently urged us to move along, assuming her brother would be arriving any minute. Whatever pity you had for your brother, Mrs. Barrymore, you knew he was dying, and that his death could give Sir Henry the perfect opportunity. He could feign the same physical illness - consumption, was it not? With Selden dressed in Sir Baskerville's clothes, you would wait for his death and then use his body as the decoy. *(Beat)* As I said, it is all rather straightforward. Have all questions now been sufficiently answered?

SHERIFF MORTIMER

I'm not sure I understand. You're telling me this man is both Sir Henry AND Jack Stapleton, who is not the brother of Beryl Stapleton, but her husband?

BERYL

Fiancé, actually.

HOLMES

Lest you void the inheritance too soon.

SHERIFF MORTIMER

And they've just been waiting for this escaped prisoner to die, so they can use his body as a decoy?

HOLMES

It seems you understand perfectly, Sheriff.

SHERIFF MORTIMER

But...why this obsession over the old legend? What was the wrench in their initial plans?

HOLMES

Why - *you*, Sheriff.

SHERIFF MORTIMER

I've gotta sit down.

WATSON supports him by the elbow while ELIZA tenderly mops at his forehead with a handkerchief.

HOLMES

Is it not true, Sheriff, that you were abruptly transferred to Mount Gretna, with almost no forewarning?

SHERIFF MORTIMER

S'true enough. My superiors were so eager to see the back of me, they practically threw me on the train themselves-!

HOLMES

And in doing so, plunged the entire plan into jeopardy. When you began asking questions the Stapletons feared you would think Sir Charles' death deliberate and link the dog to them, but they were even more fearful that you would investigate the eventual "death" of Sir Henry as well. The co-conspirators felt they had no choice - they tried to obfuscate the situation further. And how best to do it, then by overshadowing everything with the Legend of the Hound? They simply brought the legend to life, and let it be seen by the townsfolk and yourselves.

SHERIFF MORTIMER

They hoped I would think it was all bunk - and wouldn't look into it any further.

HOLMES

Precisely.

BASKERVILLE

We thought all this talk of a hell-hound on the loose would dissuade all manner of folks from investigating. But somehow that didn't keep you away. *(to HOLMES)* And devil that you are, Sir, *you* were enticed by it!

HOLMES

Ah, of course. But how could you know, Sir Henry, that a case such as this, with all the trappings of the supernatural, would only serve to fascinate me further? Oh! But I would be remiss not to thank you, Miss Stapleton: your actions tonight were the final piece of the puzzle I needed.

BERYL

How do you mean?

HOLMES

It was only because of you, Miss Stapleton, that Watson was able to lead his merry gang to your doorstep - and I must confess, your presence at Baskerville Hall was crucial for my own investigation. I surmise you went there to warn Sir Henry that Watson and Mortimer had discovered the body. *(claps hands together excitedly)* Ah, yes! Young love! While a powerful motivator, it *also* often clouds the judgement. Wouldn't you agree, Sheriff Mortimer?

SHERIFF MORTIMER

(so caught up in the melodrama that this direct address startles him) Pardon - what - me?

HOLMES

Pay attention, man! This is where your authority comes in! As I have just proved, there was no murder. However - there was a conspiracy to commit fraud. You now have a choice before you, Sheriff Mortimer: will you be charging these star-crossed lovers, as well as their co-conspirators? Or will you have pity on a poor couple who have been unjustly discriminated against?

Everyone turns, putting SHERIFF MORTIMER on the spot.

SHERIFF MORTIMER

(conflicted) Well, the law is the law - no matter how unjust it might be. And you two *(pointing to the STAPLETONS)* have conspired to circumvent it.

BASKERVILLE and BERYL clutch at each other, the perfect pictures of doomed lovers about to be torn apart. MORTIMER hesitates.

I'm an inflexible son of a gun, I know that. That's why I got transferred: my superiors realized that I couldn't be bought. Truth is - the only reason that I'm not six feet under right now is because of the Superintendent's daughter - she begged him not to do me any harm. We were sweet on each other, you see. Nothing came of it, for...well, many reasons. *(Directly to BERYL)* You remind me a lot of her.

Beat, as the characters wait anxiously for his verdict.

WATSON

So...*will* you or will you *not* be arresting Sir Henry Baskerville and Miss Beryl Stapleton..?

SHERIFF MORTIMER

(slowly, as if coming to a conclusion)...What are you talking about, Doctor? Sir Henry Baskerville is dead - I saw his body with my own two eyes. As for Miss Stapleton and her *fiance* - why, they can take their new fortune and go wherever they damn please - so long as they never step foot back into Mount Gretna.

BERYL

Thank you, Sheriff! *Thank* you.

ELIZA

Oh, I knew he had a heart in there somewhere, big ol' softie that he is. *(to the group)* Well, come along, all of you! Down to the Jigger Shop - this deserves a celebration!

BERYL

A celebration?

SHERIFF MORTIMER

For the life of Sir Henry Baskerville, of course - cut so tragically short! We'll have his funeral in the morning, but the Stapletons must surely join us at his wake tonight!

BASKERVILLE

I don't reckon...

HOLMES

Oh come, come! How often does a man get to attend his own wake? You'll regret missing it; I should know!

ELIZA and SHERIFF MORTIMER guide BASKERVILLE and BERYL offstage, still chattering excitedly. MARY notices that HOLMES and WATSON lag behind.

MARY

(*to HOLMES*) Well? Come along, you two.

HOLMES

In a moment, my dear. Why don't you rejoin that jolly cast of characters? My esteemed biographer and I will be along shortly.

MARY looks at WATSON, who's wandered off to the side deep in thought, then at HOLMES.

MARY

(*imploringly*) Do be gentle with him?

HOLMES

Always, Mrs. Watson.

The two share a knowing look, before MARY exits. HOLMES approaches WATSON.

HOLMES

Come now, Watson, for someone who's contributed so invaluablely to this case, you seem to be quite glum about it!

WATSON

Oh, it's nothing, Holmes. Nothing for you to concern yourself with, at any rate.

HOLMES

Are you angry at me for my deception? Do forgive me if I have seemed to play a trick on you. (*Beat.*) Do you...disagree with my presuppositions? My methods?

WATSON

Oh, no, no...It's just – I was so sure my conclusions were correct! I know I do not possess even half of your towering intellectual genius, but I did my best! I applied your principles as thoroughly as I knew how and – (*sigh*) I should've known that my place is only ever to be in your shadow..a footnote to your story. As you said yourself, Holmes, I'm your biographer. Nothing more.

HOLMES

Nothing more? Oh, my dear Watson! (*really trying, but emotion is difficult*)...Some people, without possessing genius, have the remarkable power of stimulating it.

WATSON

Thank you, Holmes.

HOLMES

What I mean to say is that - (*sigh*) Really, Watson, you excel yourself. It may be that you yourself are not luminous, but you are a conductor of light. What would the great Sherlock

Holmes be, if not for his stalwart biographer? How many clients might have never come to me for assistance - if they had not first heard my name through your stories? How many cases might have gone unexamined, unsolved - if not for you? In truth; the world is better for it that *I* am a character in *your* stories. [*quieter*] It must be said that many of my clients - that *I* - am very much in your debt.

WATSON

(heartfelt)...thank you, Holmes.

HOLMES

Come now, old chap. I believe we have a wake to attend!

WATSON

(taking out a flask) Ah yes, not the first time I've attended the wake of a man still living. A toast! To Sir Henry Baskerville - may he rest in peace.

He takes a swig, then extends the flask to HOLMES, who makes his own toast.

HOLMES

And to our other dear friends, the Stapletons. May their marriage be filled with happiness, for as long as they both shall live!

WATSON begins singing "For He's A Jolly Good Fellow" HOLMES joins in on singing as both men clap each other on the shoulder and begin to make their way offstage. Suddenly - the lonesome howl of a hound. HOLMES and WATSON pause in their song and share a slightly worried look, before hurrying offstage. Lights out.

END PLAY.