

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE MASTERS OF CRIME

By C.P. Stancich

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By C.P. Stanchich

SYNOPSIS: The past is catching up with Sherlock Holmes. There is a gang after him, Dr. Watson is nowhere to be found, and London is no longer safe. After an assault leaves him a near invalid, Holmes flees incognito to the country home of an old friend. But his convalescence is challenged right away by a collection of youthful mystery enthusiasts and avid Holmes fans who have seen through his disguise. While the great detective tries to cope with these junior crime solvers, the deadly gang arrives, bringing murder to the idyllic country village. Will Holmes turn the tables on this insidious gang? Is he up to the challenge of the Masters of Crime, or will he need the help of a clutch of under-age sleuths?

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 female, 8 male, 0-3 extras)

HOLMES (m).....	The great detective. <i>(197 lines)</i>
BRADSTREET (m).....	Police inspector ready to retire. <i>(39 lines)</i>
MIRRIAM CRAY (f).....	A sensible widow, intelligent, nurturing. <i>(138 lines)</i>
JANE (f).....	16-18, thoughtful, Cray's niece. <i>(128 lines)</i>
RUDY (m).....	12-14, an energetic and imaginative school boy. <i>(91 lines)</i>
RORY (m).....	12-14, a bright but quieter school boy. <i>(91 lines)</i>
PETER (m).....	16-18, a very "public school" Oxford bound young man. <i>(99 lines)</i>
MUNTON (m).....	A middle-aged, itinerate curate. Also plays PHANTOM THREE, a thug with face obscured. <i>(45 lines)</i>
HONORIA RYE (f).....	A visiting gentlewoman. <i>(35 lines)</i>
BATESON (m).....	A middle-aged scholar. <i>(31 lines)</i>
BETTY (f).....	A maid at The Lodge. <i>(29 lines)</i>

SIMMS (m).....Metropolitan police sergeant. (20 lines)

EXTRAS:

PHANTOM ONE (m/f)Thug with face obscured. (*Non-Speaking.*)

PHANTOM TWO (m/f).....Thug with face obscured. (*Non-Speaking.*)

CONSTABLE (m/f)(*Non-Speaking.*)

DURATION: 110 minutes

SETTING: London and Lillywith Manor

TIME: 1911

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: London Alley

SCENE 2: Lillywith Lodge Garden

SCENE 3: Lillywith Lodge Garden

SCENE 4: Lillywith Lodge Garden

SCENE 5: Lillywith Manor Woods

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: Village Green

SCENE 2: Lillywith Lodge Garden

SCENE 3: Lillywith Lodge Garden

SCENE 4: Lillywith Lodge Garden

SETS

LONDON ALLEY – A toppled dustbin and other debris, a street lamp up left.

LILLYWITH LODGE GARDEN – A low fence upstage with a gate at center.

Exits left (to the house) and right (to the manor drive); an outdoor table with four chairs left of center; a chaise right of center.

VILLAGE GREEN – A bench, maybe a shrub or two.

LILLYWITH MANOR WOODS – A stump or log to be used as a seat, stage left. A body is concealed under a pile of old leaves, far right.

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

Sherlock Holmes and the Masters of Crime was originally produced by Theater Company of Lafayette in Lafayette (CO) and Madge Montgomery. The production was directed by Kirsten Jorgensen Smith with the following cast:

SHERLOCK HOLMES.....	Brad Rutledge
BRADSTREET	Artemus Martin
MIRRIAM CRAY	Darcy Orrok
JANE	Brittany Strautman
RUDY.....	Aidan Sockrider
RORY.....	Sage Miller
PETER.....	Nathan Ellgren
MUNTON.....	Douglas Brent Smith
HONORIA RYE.....	Anna Hershey
BATESON.....	Michael Samarzia
BETTY	Alex Goodgion
SIMMS	Madge Montgomery

DEDICATION

To Madge—finder and facilitator of possibilities

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT START: *London Alley. 1911, late spring, night time. Street Lights up on the set as the engine of a car rises and recedes; a cat calls. Enter HOLMES in evening dress and with a walking stick, left, pursued by the PHANTOM ONE brandishing a knife. HOLMES crosses to center stage, turns, and smiles.*

HOLMES: *(Playfully defiant.)* Whoever is paying you, it isn't for your lightness of foot. I heard your approach half a street away.

PHANTOM ONE flourishes the knife. HOLMES makes ready with his stick. PHANTOM TWO enters right with a leather sap, pausing to observe. PHANTOM ONE strikes; HOLMES dodges the first swipe, then parries the second with his stick, causing PHANTOM ONE to drop the knife and recoil in pain. PHANTOM TWO advances on HOLMES, unnoticed.

HOLMES: *(To PHANTOM ONE.)* Is that it?

Sensing the approach of PHANTOM TWO, HOLMES turns in time to block a blow from the sandbag. As he grapples with PHANTOM TWO, PHANTOM ONE recovers and grabs HOLMES from behind. PHANTOM TWO disengages, then strikes HOLMES across the top of the head. HOLMES gives a groan. PHANTOM ONE, startled by HOLMES'S moan, disengages. HOLMES unsteadily turns to PHANTOM TWO, who hit HOLMES in the face with the sandbag. HOLMES moans and collapses. PHANTOM TWO stands over HOLMES, pausing; then he raises the sandbag for a fatal blow.

PHANTOM THREE: *(Offstage, in command.)* Hold!

PHANTOM TWO stops. PHANTOM ONE and TWO turn as their leader, PHANTOM THREE, enters left with a sword cane.

PHANTOM THREE: *(Advancing.)* The coup de grâce is mine. And I require that Sherlock Holmes be sensible when he meets his end. He must know who it is who has dealt with him.

PHANTOM TWO steps back, mildly crestfallen as *PHANTOM THREE* looks down on *HOLMES*. He then looks up to *PHANTOM TWO*.

PHANTOM THREE: I do not mean to be discourteous. You are an artist with the sap. But if you had hit him a third time, we'd have been standing around all night waiting for him to regain his senses. At this stage, it would be a shame if my revenge came off the boil. *(Withdraws a sword from the cane.)* But a little wait is fine... before he learns who I am, and feels the sharp point of my revenge!

SIMMS: *(Offstage, right.)* Who's that!

PHANTOM THREE: Damn!

A police whistle sounds, offstage. PHANTOM ONE gives a start and backs up, left. PHANTOM THREE contorts in frustration. PHANTOM TWO steps up with the sandbag, but PHANTOM THREE stops him.

PHANTOM THREE: No! This is my vengeance... and it will be perfect. Let's go.

ALL PHANTOMS withdraw, left. PHANTOM THREE pauses, turns and sheaths his sword cane.

PHANTOM THREE: I always said Sherlock Holmes's success was down to luck rather than brains!

ALL PHANTOMS exit, left. The whistle grows louder. HOLMES sits up as SIMMS enters, right.

HOLMES: Damn and blast!

SIMMS: Are you all right, Mr. Holmes.

SIMMS helps HOLMES to his feet.

HOLMES: No I am not, sergeant. I've had my head and face smashed in, and I am still ignorant!

BRADSTREET: *(Offstage, right.)* Is that you, Simms?

SIMMS: *(Looking right.)* Yes inspector. I found Mr. Holmes.

HOLMES: Found me one minute too soon. I was about to find out who is behind these persecutions!

BRADSTREET: (*Enters.*) What's this? What's this? Is the rescued man ungrateful?

SIMMS: Begging your pardon, Mr. Holmes, but it didn't look as if you had another minute. Another minute and you might have lost your ignorance but ended up spitted for roasting.

HOLMES: You may be right about that, sergeant. Yet I confess to such frustration about the identity of this phantom, that I would have risked it. I hesitate to admit that my deductions have fallen short... and letting myself be beaten into a sham unconsciousness...

HOLMES leaves off, wobbling.

BRADSTREET: Easy.

HOLMES: I'm quite all right, Bradstreet. The villain...

HOLMES swoons into unconsciousness, SIMMS catches him and eases him to the ground.

BRADSTREET: Sham unconsciousness, eh?

HOLMES moans.

SIMMS: Well if it is, it's worthy of the Theater Royale. (*Examines HOLMES.*) His eye's closing up.

BRADSTREET: Villains!

SIMMS: And there's an awful knot on the top of his head.

BRADSTREET: Look, I'll stay with him. You whistle up Preston and have him get us a cab.

SIMMS hands HOLMES over to BRADSTREET, and heads offstage, right. SIMMS exits, blowing his whistle. BRADSTREET examines HOLMES.

BRADSTREET: Well, Holmes. What are we going to do with you? You need a doctor... but the doctor you need most is showing his wife the temples of Alexandria. No Watson... and no brother Mycroft... and you daren't go home.

HOLMES: (*Moaning.*) Bradstreet...

BRADSTREET: I'm here, old fellow.

HOLMES: You mustn't fuss... I was... exaggerating the effects... the effects... (*Trails off.*)

BRADSTREET: Right... you're only play acting. And it's not 1911 and you and I aren't shuffling along through the reign of our third sovereign. And neither of us should be out to grass.

HOLMES: Where's Watson?

BRADSTREET: Egypt!

HOLMES: Tell him...

BRADSTREET: You tell him yourself. You'll be well up and about by the time he gets back... if we can find a safe place for you.

HOLMES: Tell Watson... this must be the work of... the Merchant of Death!

BRADSTREET: What!

HOLMES: It must be... on my last case... he warned me... (*Swoons again.*)

BRADSTREET: Now I really do hope you're play acting. Holmes? Holmes!

Enter SIMMS, right.

SIMMS: The lads are fetching a cab. How is he?

BRADSTREET: Out again.

SIMMS: Did he say anything?

BRADSTREET: Yes, sergeant, and I wish he hadn't.

SIMMS: Then I don't suppose I want to know why, sir.

BRADSTREET: He said he thought it might be down to the Merchant of Death.

Pause.

SIMMS: Sounds a right criminal, inspector. How come I've never heard of him?

BRADSTREET: Oh, you've heard of him. You've never heard of him in connection with the name because you don't read the right newspapers. The title refers to Basil Zaharoff.

SIMMS: What? That industrialist fellow?

BRADSTREET: Yes, Simms... that industrialist fellow. That Turkish-born Greek with the Russian name, that French citizen who's turned Vickers into the leading arms dealer in the world. He's got a voice and a pair of ears in every house of power from Whitehall to the Czar's Summer Palace. He has a network of agents worthy of any government in Europe.

SIMMS: And Mr. Holmes went foul of him?

BRADSTREET: I hope not. About a month ago, Holmes was consulted by a small firm in Manchester with a new model repeating rifle. The plans had gone missing... something like that. Holmes got rather close to Zaharoff... and somebody warned him off. Somebody with a coat of arms on the carriage door.

SIMMS: Oh. And being Sherlock Holmes—

BRADSTREET: He pressed on...

SIMMS: But if this... what's his name moves in such high circles—

BRADSTREET: I agree... but his agents don't always keep their hands so clean. There was a case a few years back... a body... I don't know who the inspector on the case was. But he was told to stand clear, and a bunch of jolly public school types from the intelligence service covered the whole thing up... body and all.

SIMMS: (*Considers.*) Yeah... well, seems to me Mr. Holmes ain't without friends in high places.

BRADSTREET: True enough. But without Watson, I wouldn't know who to ask. (*Considers, shakes his head.*) That's if his deduction is right.

SIMMS: Usually is...

BRADSTREET: In times past. But he was desperate enough to step into this trap just to get an inkling. Doesn't sound like he's got much confidence.

Pause.

SIMMS: Well, what do we do about him, sir? Tonight, I mean.

BRADSTREET: Deuced if I know. He can't go home and he needs a surgeon. I'd take him to the nick and lock him in a cell, but if it is Zaharoff, then he won't be safe even there.

SIMMS: Our own men?

BRADSTREET: To tell the truth, sergeant, I don't trust anyone beyond you and me. The Merchant of Death has ears everywhere. (*Considers.*) So this is what we're going to do: We'll get the lads to bundle him into the cab, letting on that we're taking him home. But we'll go to my place instead. (*Rolls his eyes.*) That should put me in it with the wife, but there it is. We'll get a doctor, and if he can't travel, we put him in hospital with a guard on him.

SIMMS: And if he can?

BRADSTREET: We get him out of London... to some place secret. And tomorrow... I will send a telegram care of the Cecil Hotel in Alexandria... and you will make discreet inquiries around Whitehall, trying to locate Mycroft Holmes.

SIMMS: Well where can we send him... if we can't get advice from his brother?

BRADSTREET considers and smiles.

BRADSTREET: One person comes to mind... a kindly widow. I met her... must be more than a dozen years back. Led Holmes to the last of the Moriarty gang. Yes... nerves of iron, and not afraid of danger. And I think I know where she can be found. (*Considers a moment, then shakes himself back to the present.*) Go and get the lads.

SIMMS grunts and hurries offstage, right. HOLMES moans.

HOLMES: (*Weakly.*) Find Watson...

BRADSTREET: Easy, old man. I'll send a wire to Watson. And I'll send another to Mrs. Miriam Cray... nice and remote. I don't even believe she's on the telephone.

Lights down.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT START: *Lillywith Lodge Garden. The next day, midday. Sunlight up, the occasional bird tweets in the distances. CRAY is center stage, holding a basket of cut flowers and wearing gardening gloves. She smells a single rose, and satisfied, she places it with the rest of flowers, then crosses to the table. She set the basket down and removes her gloves before sitting. Enter BETTY, left, carrying a telegram on a tray. CRAY smiles at her, and she smiles back, taking in the collection of flowers with respectful approval.*

BETTY: There, Ma'am. Not so bad a haul.

CRAY: You were right, Betty. I let the rains make me a pessimist. A few more nice days like this one, and the garden will explode with color. How is Jane? All unpacked?

BETTY: Yes Ma'am. She packed light, like last year.

CRAY: Ever practical, that niece of mine.

BETTY: She said she would be down directly. *(Offers the tray.)*
Telegram for you, ma'am.

CRAY nods to the table and BETTY sets down the tray.

BETTY: Should I take these for you, ma'am? To the scullery?

CRAY: *(Considers.)* Uh... yes... see what you can do with them. If they'll stretch, do one for the dining room and one for the sitting room... and something delicate for Jane's bed table.

BETTY gives a rudimentary curtsy and collects the basket.

CRAY: And ask Jane if she will take tea or coffee by way of revival.

BETTY: Ma'am.

BETTY exits, left. CRAY picks up the telegram, opens it, and reads. Her expression moves swiftly from benign interest, to astonishment.

CRAY: Good heavens!

She rereads the letter, then looks off into space, remembering with bright eyes and a gentle smile. JANE appears, far left, and stops briefly to observe before moving to the table. CRAY set down the telegram.

CRAY: And there you are.

JANE: Yes, Aunt Miriam.

CRAY: Not too worn out?

JANE: No. It's not a long journey.

CRAY: True. I believe one could catch the morning train, visit you for lunch at the vicarage, and be back home for dinner... provided one might dispense with fuss and fatigue that women are supposed to put on in order to seem feminine.

JANE: *(Smiles.)* Yes, I don't understand the obligation to wilt. I enjoy travel... and I arrive full of energy. Although I am not fond of arriving besmirched.

CRAY: Well, I suppose being independent minded doesn't mean rejecting everything we've been taught. I'm glad you enjoy traveling. What about prolonged visits to studious old aunts? Is that traveling, or duty?

JANE: *(Looks hurt.)* I don't think you are an obligation, Aunt Miriam. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit last year.

CRAY: Not too quiet for you?

JANE: I don't mind quiet... and I love having a new village to explore. And there's your landlady, Lady Bisset up at the Manor. Is she still dispensing philanthropy?

CRAY: Oh yes.

JANE: And when things truly are quiet... well, my Aunt Miriam has the most provocative private library of anyone I know.

CRAY: Of which you have said little to your parents?

JANE: *(Smiles.)* And then of course there is my romantic suitor.

CRAY: Your what?

JANE: *(Laughs.)* That busy little boy who brought me flowers and wouldn't stop sleuthing. Lady Bisset's grandson? Is he down?

CRAY: Oh... Rudy. Yes... he announced his arrival last week. He's not so little... but just as busy. And he's a cohort this year. Lady Bisset found him... requisitioned him more like, from the Lacklanders in the next valley. Rory.

JANE: Rory? Rudy and Rory: there's a pair out of a "Boy's Own" serial.

CRAY: And that is exactly how they behave. I feel rather sorry for the new boy. I feel he's been plucked up by Lady Bisset to protect the neighborhood from her grandson's energy. Although Rory seems good natured enough to run along after Rudy. In fact he seemed genuinely amused yesterday when they came by.

JANE: Well, there you are. Village and woodlands to explore. Books to read; charity works to do; knights errant with whom to contend. No time for boredom.

CRAY: I'm sorry I fussed.

JANE: And then there my aunt's own adventures. I enjoy hearing about them more than anything.

CRAY: My what? When have I...

JANE: The murders of Blackmead? That American millionaire—

CRAY: Oh. Yes, Oscar Dove...

JANE: And the great detective himself.

CRAY, caught by nostalgia, looks down at the telegram.

CRAY: Yes, the great Sherlock... *(Her eyes grow wide as she looks from the telegram to JANE. She gasps at her next observation.)* That's uncanny.

JANE betrays a smile, then tries to look innocent.

JANE: Sorry?

CRAY: Percipience like that is certainly not approved of in young ladies. It's likely to get you accused of keeping a broomstick under your bed.

JANE: *(Pleased.)* I don't know what you mean.

CRAY: It's too late to be coy. *(Holds up the telegram.)* I have a communication concerning Sherlock Holmes for the first time in years, and you knew?

JANE: It was simple.

CRAY: It's disconcerting.

JANE: It's no different than you making an intellectual leap across several historical facts to make a connection, and I've seen you do that before. (*Gives an inward pause.*) Of course you disconcerted the men in the conversation, especially when—

CRAY: (*Insistent.*) Jane!

JANE: Yes?

CRAY: (*Tapping the telegram.*) How did you know?

JANE: (*Shrugs.*) You connect facts. I connect expressions. I saw you reading that telegram when I came out just now. The look on your face was not quite like any other... except last summer, when you told the story of Blackmead... and you got to the part where you and actually got to share in the solution of the crime.

CRAY: Really?

JANE: Yes.

CRAY: Astonishing.

JANE: I don't think so. It doesn't feel that way to me.

CRAY: No... I suppose it wouldn't. (*Considers, then shakes the speculation away.*) Where were we?

JANE: Telegram.

CRAY: Oh! Well, you are right. It isn't from him... the detective. But it is concerning him. He may need my help... though I don't think he knows it yet. (*Rings bell.*)

JANE: Is there a case?

CRAY: It doesn't say. But there always is, isn't there? He is in trouble... and it's a secret, so we shouldn't speculate, and no discussion with outsiders.

Enter BETTY, left.

JANE: Of course.

CRAY: (*To BETTY.*) Betty... my writing box... and the timetable please.

BETTY nods and departs.

CRAY: I suppose I can tell you that I am replying to inspector Bradstreet of Scotland Yard, and that I shall be taking the early train up to town tomorrow. Will you be all right here?

JANE: Of course, Aunt.

CRAY: I intend to be back by mid-afternoon, and will telegraph if delayed. (*Considers.*) Or if I have any little commissions for you.

CRAY grows lost in thought, musing. JANE smiles.

JANE: Aunt?

CRAY: Yes, niece?

JANE: That's the expression.

CRAY: Mm? Ah.

Lights down.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT START: *Lillywith Lodge Garden. The next day, after lunch. Sunlight up, the occasional bird tweets in the distance. Enter RUDY, right. He advances several steps, then pauses to look back off, right. As he does so, RORY appears upstage of the fence, right. He watches RUDY, unnoticed, stifling a laugh of delight. RUDY takes a step or two right and cocks his head.*

RUDY: I say? Rory? (*Inward.*) Where'd he get to?

RORY: (*Grinning.*) Right with you.

RUDY turns upstage, hands on hips.

RUDY: I say... terribly well snuck.

RORY moves along the fence to the gate and lets himself through.

RORY: Glad you approve.

RUDY: I do... except we're not doing infiltration right now. We're working on intelligence gathering.

RORY: I can't help what you're working on old bean. And I was not sneaking. I was paying a visit in the proper way... using the gate. If anyone was sneaking, it was you, cutting through the woods like that.

RUDY: I don't see how you can call it sneaking, when the lodge and the woods both belong to the manor, and the manor belongs to my family.

RORY: Not sure Mrs. Cray would appreciate you getting all feudal.

RUDY: (*Considers.*) Good point. Although, when gathering intelligence from a tenant, it might pay to come off feudal, as you put it.

Pause.

RORY: What intelligence?

RUDY: Why Miriam's had to go up to London.

RORY: She's gone to London? How do you know?

RUDY: Because while you were writing your letters this morning, I was out investigating. Penwilly overtook her in his van and gave her a lift to the station. Said she made some comment about how sudden trips always make her feel breathless.

RORY: Well then what are we doing here? If she's gone—

Enter BETTY, left.

RUDY: Because there's someone else you should meet. (*Sees BETTY.*) Ah! Hello-o, Miss Betty!

BETTY: (*Sees then, speaks with fatigue.*) Oh... Master Rudolph.

RUDY: (*Frowns.*) Must you? You know I don't like being called that.

BETTY: Sorry... Lord Rudolph.

RUDY: (*Erupts in a laugh of frustration.*) Not the title, the name! Just... Rudy, if you please.

BETTY: (*With a wink to RORY.*) Rudy... yes sir.

RUDY: Thank you. Has Jane arrived? Is she at home?

BETTY: Yes and yes. And I suppose you would like me to announce you?

RUDY: Yes please. She has not met Rory.

BETTY: How ever has she lived so long and not met Rory. (*Winks at RORY again.*) I'll see if she is available.

Exit BETTY, left.

RUDY: (*Softly.*) There you are... a good sleuth hound knows how to charm.

RORY: (*With soft sarcasm.*) Yeah... she seemed... charmed.

RUDY: Eh?

RORY: What's wrong with Rudolph?

RUDY: Oh... nothing... I just hate it is all. It's too... ancestral... too Teutonic. And it's positively 19th Century. No... I shall have another name entirely when I'm a professional sleuth and adventurer. The family will insist on it, anyway. Not the sort of profession for a scion of the nobility. I shall find an apt surname... and take the given name of Albert.

Enter JANE, left, she pauses and watches, unobserved.

RORY: Albert!

RUDY: Yes... what's wrong with it?

RORY: How is Albert less 19th Century and less Teutonic than Rudolph?

JANE: I should like to know that myself.

JANE advances. RORY is slightly embarrassed at having been overheard; RUDY is preoccupied with his irritation.

RUDY: It just is. And anyway, I haven't had to listen to myself called it all my life. Jane... this is Rory.

JANE steps up to a taken RORY, and offers her hand, which he awkwardly takes.

JANE: Rory.

RORY: Uh... Jane... pleasure to meet you.

JANE: And you. I'm afraid Aunt Miriam is out.

RUDY: We know. Gone to London. Why was that?

JANE: What? Oh... why did she go to London? Oh... well, now, that is interesting... (*Gives a conspiratorial lean, drawing the others close.*) She went to town... for reasons of her own.

The others recoil; RORY breaths out a laugh, RUDY frowns.

RUDY: That's how it is, is it?

JANE gives a smirk and a nod.

RUDY: Well... if you're not going to fill us in... then I guess we'll have to fill you in. (*Steps to RORY, puts an arm around his shoulder.*) This is Rory; short for...

RORY: Roderick.

RUDY: And if I let him speak, he will let you know that he's known me less than a week, and that I kidnapped him from the Lacklanders due to the relentless hand of Fate.

RORY: A terrible case of "birds of a feather." That is, we're both younger brothers of the aristocracy, about to head off to school. Our elder brothers are both headed for the foreign office, or politics. And the reason that clinched the deal—

RUDY: We both want to throw off the centuries of ermine, fight for justice, and follow the fascinating life of the criminologist.

JANE: You mean... police?

RUDY frowns.

RORY: Yeah... I do, actually. He's got something else in mind. I don't know what you call it... "detective-free-agent-avenger."

JANE: What's wrong with the police?

RUDY: Dull! (*Reestablishes his arm around RORY and jostles him.*) Police have their uses, old bean. But there's more excitement to be had as a Master of Crime.

JANE: A what?

RORY: (*Shaking his head.*) Masters of Crime. That is the name for us.

JANE: Are you sure? Doesn't that sound the opposite of what you mean? A bit criminal?

RORY: That's what I told him. I said "Masters of Crime" makes us sound like master criminals, not master crime fighters. It didn't do any good. He's very stubborn once he's made his mind up.

RUDY'S expression shifts from determination to smugness.

RUDY: We are the Masters of Crime. Will you join our league, and fight for justice?

Pause.

JANE: Mmm. I don't believe in fighting. I do believe in justice, though, and I'm sure I speak for Aunt Miriam when I say how glad we are you include women in your manifesto.

RUDY: Ah... I didn't actually... until just now... when it suddenly sounded awfully good. (*Considers.*) Yes... this is the 20th Century. All true hearts are welcome.

Enter BETTY, in a stage of agitation.

BETTY: (*To JANE.*) Pardon, Miss, but there's ructions at the church!

RUDY and RORY turn.

JANE: What's happened?

BETTY: It's Mr. Corvier, he's been injured.

RUDY: The zesty curate?

BETTY: The boy from the telegraph was just by, and said there's been an ambulance called and the doctor summoned. He was up on a ladder, working on that pegging up high. You know that beautiful old woodwork the mistress likes to praise?

RUDY: He was working with it last year.

BETTY: Always is. The vicar and the whole town joke about it. If you can't find Mr. Corvier, look up a ladder. Anyway, he's come off his ladder now, and the boy says he's got a busted shoulder, some ribs, and maybe a hip. Screaming with the pain, he was, and saying unclergy-like things about whoever knocked the ladder.

RUDY: Knocked the ladder? *(Gathers himself.)* Right. I'm investigating. *(Looks to RORY.)*

RORY: Uh... not me. Your church... your territory. I'll wait for your report.

RUDY: *(With a toss of the head.)* Suit yourself.

RUDY hurries off, left.

BETTY: What's the old vicar going to do now? He depended on Mr. Corvier for so much. Should have retired years back, and with his bronchitis last March he can still barely get through a quiet evensong.

JANE: I hope the poor man is all right.

BETTY pulls a telegram out of her apron.

BETTY: The boy bought me a wire from the mistress. She said I should show it to you.

JANE looks to RORY before reaching to take the telegram.

RORY: I should go.

JANE: No, no. I was going to have some lemonade. Join me. Betty?

BETTY: Yes, Miss.

BETTY glances at the wire, gets a nod from JANE, and exits left. JANE reads the paper then folds and pockets it. She smiles at RORY and nods toward the table. They move left and will sit.

JANE: Rudy seems very lucky to have found you. I remember last year, he seemed a very romantic, very bright young man. But also a fish out of water. I hope his... dynamism... hasn't tired you.

RORY: *(Grins.)* He's all right.

Pause. JANE smiles, looking at RORY until he squirms with shyness and smiles back.

RORY: Really. Known him a few days and I think I could call on him in a scrape the rest of my life. Mind you, he thinks I'm potty when I tell him I don't just want to be a detective, but a police detective.

JANE: Whereas he thinks it's de rigueur to be the gentleman amateur criminologist.

RORY: Or secret agent.

JANE: Which one may do... if one expects a private income. It's not an expectation I've much experience of, I'm afraid. We are not quite "church poor," but...

RORY grunts an acknowledgement.

RORY: I'm expected to have a profession. (*Rolls his eyes.*) Course, when I tell them I want that profession to be the police, they'll look at me as if I said I wanted to run a cattle station in Australia.

JANE: So wisely, you've said nothing.

RORY: And won't do. I shall practice discretion. I'll go off to Eton, and then university, and I will listen politely as the family suggest the Colonial or Foreign Office... like the previous revered generations.

JANE: While your eye is fixed firmly on the Home Office.

JANE and RORY smile at each other. RORY taps his nose.

RORY: Anyway, I will miss my new "old" friend Rudy when I go off to school.

JANE: Not Eton bound?

RORY: Don't think so. When I mentioned Eton, he made a face. But wherever he goes, I'll write to him, and call him "Albert." That should keep me in his good books. Of course if he doesn't make good his boast about your Aunt, I'll call him "Rudolph."

JANE: His boast?

RORY: (*Pronouncing the detective's name with reverence.*) He said that Mrs. Cray knew Sherlock Holmes. He said she'd actually been involved in more than one case.

JANE: Ah. Not a boast.

RORY: (*Thrilled.*) Really? And Mrs. Cray was the woman referred to as "Mrs. Allworthy" in Dr. Watson's "The Adventure of the Blackmarsh Society?"

JANE: (*Chuckling.*) She is... and I believe the Doctor gave her that name because she was insistent that all involved had aliases. Even the estate got a new name.

RORY: Really! What was it called?

JANE: Blackmead, I think.

RORY: Did you read Dr. Watson's account?

JANE: Not until I heard Aunt Miriam tell the story last summer. And since you are about to ask, yes, the details seem to agree.

RORY: And the earlier case... at Hurlstone?

JANE: "The Doom of Devilsmoor?" Sadder... more elementary.

RORY: But real?

JANE sees the wonder in RORY'S face and laughs with compassion.

JANE: Yes, real. But it's far better to hear it from my Aunt. I'll invite you to tea and we will fuss until she tells it. You're not leaving us right away are you?

RORY: I'm here at least a fortnight. I'd stay a month to hear a firsthand account of one of Sherlock Holmes's cases.

Enter BETTY bearing a tray with pitcher and glasses. She sets it on the table. JANE leans close to RORY, confiding.

JANE: I confess... I know exactly how you feel. I was quite cross with my family that they'd never mentioned Aunt Miriam's adventures. It wasn't exactly a secret that I enjoyed Dr. Watson's accounts. I was told it was deemed too sensational until I was older—not the periodical retellings, of course, only the first hand accounts. Yes... I was accused of censorious looks when I returned from last year's visit. (*Lifts her nose, skyward.*)

RORY: At home? What happened?

JANE: I replied that my looks were righteously indignant and was treated to a refrain I'd heard many times before; Aunt Miriam is a fine person, but a little too independent and a little too modern to be a model for young girls. (*Acknowledging BETTY.*) Thank you, Betty.

BETTY pours.

JANE: (*Conspiratorially.*) Listen, Rory, since Rudy is off getting the scoop on the curate's tumble. How would you like to get the jump on some news that will really make him take notice?

RORY: Yes please.

JANE looks to BETTY, who rolls her eyes and exits.

JANE: It's just possible there will be new word from Sherlock Holmes. I believe that's my Aunt's business in town. Don't ask me how I know... but trust me. I only tell you so you can flabbergast Rudy when he goes on about intelligence gathering.

RORY accepts a glass, leaning close.

RORY: Really?

Lights down.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

AT START: *Lillywith Lodge Garden. Two days later, afternoon. Sunlight up, the occasional bird tweets in the distance. HOLMES is asleep on the lounge, wrapped in a shawl and covered in a foot rug. He sports a head bandage. RORY is concealed behind the fence, upstage, right.*

CRAY: (*Offstage, right.*) You told them what!

JANE: (*Offstage.*) Shh. You will wake him!

Enter CRAY and JANE, right, speaking in hushed tones.

CRAY: Jane...!

JANE: In fairness, Aunt, I didn't know that you were bringing him here. You intimated some sort of meeting. I thought you would be bringing news of Mr. Holmes, not the genuine article. In any case, you know what villages are like. The poor curate couldn't fall off his ladder in peace. A strange invalid, bundled off a train and to the lodge does not stand a chance of remaining unnoticed. And you know what Rudy is like. All it takes is a sniff of a secret being kept, and he's off.

CRAY: *(Relaxing.)* You're right, my dear. Much better to bring the two of them into the fold and ask them to keep quiet. They will take the matter seriously. In fact, the only one in this household who ignores the gravity is the patient himself.

JANE: Is it more than concussion, then?

CRAY: Concussion, black eye... and two or three other maladies the Inspector learned about from the physician. Ribs, internal bruising. The incident the police witnessed was not the first, apparently.

JANE: Poor Mr. Holmes.

CRAY: Stubborn Mr. Holmes. He doesn't bring the police in until he's barely escaped once—with injury—then when he does bring in Bradstreet, he uses himself as a tethered kid and ends up getting his head bashed in. And even after that? Quarrelsome, wobbly, out of options and yet still a thoroughly bad patient.

JANE: *(Chuckles.)* I admit, when I imagined meeting the Great Sherlock Holmes, I did not expect an annoyed grunt and a snort of avoidance.

CRAY: You should have been at his bedside last night when I tried to get the beef tea down him. I left it to Betty after that.

JANE: Of course it's not his injuries, but his frustration and embarrassment that makes him so irascible.

CRAY: Is it?

JANE: His partner is out of the country. He's the hunted instead of the hunter. He isn't certain of who or why. He is injured and vulnerable and not used to giving up his independence. I may be very young, but his reaction seems a typical masculine response to such circumstances.

CRAY: That's what's perplexing. He's not a typical male.

JANE: Hence his embarrassment.

HOLMES: *(Without shifting.)* Very observant, your niece. And astute.

CRAY and JANE turn toward HOLMES, then look to each other before approaching him.

JANE: Thank you, Mr. Holmes.

CRAY: Not sleeping, then?

HOLMES: Apparently not. This bold constitutional was not nearly so exhausting as I thought it would prove.

CRAY: Well, we shall have to march you all the way up to the woods tomorrow; and if that doesn't tire you out, then it's up the long drive to the Manor.

HOLMES: No doubt, no doubt. I should get fit as soon as I can so I may move along. In spite of the fact that Miss Jane is a confessed devotee of my adventures, I wish neither to impose nor to bring danger.

CRAY: This is a remote place.

HOLMES: I am sure it is. But whoever wants me is clever, and it took Bradstreet two days to bundle me off to you. No... unless I identify the persecutor, it is best I move along. I am a danger to those around me... even if they are intrepid adventurers like Miriam Cray and her forward niece.

CRAY: Where will you go?

HOLMES: No idea. I would catch up with Watson except that he has chosen the Levant with summer coming on. Perhaps I will cross the Atlantic and call on our friend Oscar Dove... at last, check on the young rogue, Busby.

CRAY: That young rogue... (*Turns to JANE.*) ...the Baker Street Irregular I told you about. I'm afraid he's 28.

HOLMES: Good heavens! It's been that long? And he's still with Dove?

CRAY: Oscar's last letter said as much. That was before Christmas.

HOLMES: (*Impressed.*) Well, if he has lasted this long, he will probably end up a millionaire like his mentor. Forgive me, Miss Jane. Do you know of whom we speak?

JANE: (*Ignoring the question; getting down to business.*) Do you sincerely think you will be pursued here?

HOLMES: I think it likely that I already have been. If my nemesis is who I fear it is, then two days is ample time for his agents to determine Bradstreet's plans. The police themselves may well be helping him... wittingly or not. I have no reason to suspect the honesty of the inspector, Sergeant Simms, or any of their men, but I myself have wormed restricted information from the most vigilant of officers... more times than I would care to remember. In any event, I felt eyes on me during the train journey.

CRAY: Felt?

HOLMES: *(Smiles.)* Yes, shocking. Don't tell Watson I said it. It may be deduction reduced to an unconscious level or it may be genuine intuition. But, it felt like a... feeling. *(Gives a smile and a half glance over his shoulder.)* Rather like the feeling I presently possess.

CRAY: *(Cocks her head.)* You feel you are being watched... now.

HOLMES: I am certain of it. Undersized, arboreal, mouth open.

JANE squints and looks above and beyond HOLMES, right.

CRAY: *(With creeping alarm.)* Someone is watching the house.

JANE: *(Gives a "tch" of recognition.)* It's Rudy.

CRAY: Rudy?

JANE: He's up a tree.

HOLMES: He hasn't chosen his cover well. He's too far away to see properly or hear anything. And in three discrete glances I have yet to see him look as if he wasn't afraid of falling at any moment.

CRAY: How silly. *(Draws breath to call.)*

JANE: *(Cutting in.)* Don't call.

CRAY: But—

JANE: He won't come. He's not spying, Aunt. It's hero worship. Now that Rudy knows it is Mr. Holmes, he'll be too embarrassed to admit he's been lurking.

HOLMES: Honestly, Mrs. Cray. I must congratulate you on your relations. This girl reads human nature as easily as Watson reads racing forms... and to far better effect. So how do we trick this admirer down? What about jealousy?

CRAY: Jealousy?

HOLMES: Yes, from where he is, he can clearly see that his colleague has a much closer hiding place... behind the fence.

CRAY and JANE furtively look up stage.

CRAY: Oh, yes. To the right, along from the gate.

JANE: Rory.

HOLMES: Will this one respond to a formal invitation, do you think?

CRAY: You may try. *(Drops her voice.)* Master Roderick... is less stubborn.

HOLMES: *(Raising his voice slightly.)* Master Roderick? Do you think you might put off your communion with the garden border and join us?

RORY stands and brushes himself off. He makes for the gate and approaches; HOLMES, CRAY, and JANE exchange smiles.

RORY: Pleasure to meet you, Mr. Holmes. Sorry for the skulking, sir... Mrs. Cray. But we thought... if he was resting...

CRAY: I would have sent you away if you'd tried the front door. Well, at least you thought that part through.

RORY: Sorry ma'am.

HOLMES: Nonsense. I am happy to meet an admirer. Especially one as stealthy as any Baker Street Irregular.

RORY brightens at the compliment. He steps forward and offers his hand to HOLMES, who takes it.

RORY: Really. Thank you very much, sir. A pleasure to meet you.

HOLMES nods, then looks at his hand and fishes for a hanky.

HOLMES: And you. *(To JANE and CRAY.)* Enough for jealousy, do you think?

RUDY gives a bleat of panic, offstage. This is followed by a muffled crash.

CRAY: Enough to unbalance him, anyway. (To RORY.) All right, so you've solved the mystery and met him. Now go inside and have Betty show you where to wash up.

RORY gives a breathy smile of exultation, and scampers off, left.

JANE: (Looking off, right.) Poor Rudy. Not putting on the nonchalance very well.

CRAY: (Calling offstage.) Picking cherries.

RUDY: (Offstage.) What? Oh... yes.

CRAY: Hard luck. Those are beech trees.

Enter RUDY, adorned in leaf litter.

CRAY: Never mind. Since you have... dropped in... I think we have a visitor you would like to meet.

RUDY steps up, smiling.

JANE: Mr. Holmes, may we present, Lord Rudolph.

RUDY frowns at the mention of the name, but quickly recovers and shakes hands with HOLMES. HOLMES repeats his first withdrawal and wipes his hands.

RUDY: Mr. Holmes... uh...

HOLMES: Yes, I'm sure.

RUDY: Sorry?

CRAY: Enough! You look like a personified woodland in a school pageant. Go and have Betty brush you off.

RUDY checks himself out and starts to brush himself off. CRAY stops him with a gesture and he retreats left. Enter RORY, left, crossing with RUDY. They each pause.

RUDY: Going rather well, don't you think?

RORY nods and hurries right smiling. RUDY continues offstage, left.

CRAY: I should send them away. You are supposed to be resting, not entertaining a batch of admirers.

HOLMES: I don't mind admirers when they are young. The young are generally not disappointed when I fall short of the paragon portrayed in Watson's stories. I don't mind a few questions, so long as they are pertinent. It will make a nice change. I have, after all, spent two days being looked after by Bradstreet's wife. After twenty years of hearing about me either as a benevolent genius or a vile opportunist, she didn't know what to make of me. Every time I regained consciousness, there she was... staring at me like I was the last slice of cake. And every time I opened my eyes, she jumped. Her idea of a pertinent question was "more beef tea, Mr. Holmes?"

CRAY relents with a reluctant nod.

JANE: I have a pertinent question.

JANE waits for and receives a nod from HOLMES.

JANE: You sounded as if you had a leading candidate for your tormentor. Who is it?

HOLMES: His name won't mean anything to you, but based on my recent activities I think it likely that the man behind it is named Basil Zaharov.

JANE: (*Un-phased at being patronized.*) You mean the Merchant of Death.

There is a pause; CRAY and HOLMES turn to JANE. RORY cocks his head.

RORY: (*Softly.*) Good heavens.

CRAY: (*To JANE.*) How did you know that?

JANE: We—

RORY: Excuse me. Do you mean Uncle Basil?

HOLMES, CRAY, and JANE look to RORY and speak as one.

JANE, HOLMES, and CRAY: Uncle Basil!

RORY: Yes. He's not really my uncle. I've met him.

CRAY: Well, why do you call him Uncle Basil?

RORY: I don't know, exactly. It's a sort of game, I think. He came to the house for luncheon... during the long vac last year. One of my father's friends told me he liked to be addressed as Uncle Basil... so I did. He turned red... and all of the people laughed. And then I turned red. But there was a twinkle in his eye and he leaned in close and said: "Looks like we've been had." Later father told it was some old jest--something to do with Princess Olga of the Romanovs, but he didn't know what.

HOLMES: Well... that's something I didn't know. *(To CRAY.)* Never overlook the young as a source of data.

Enter RUDY, left. He hurries to the others.

CRAY: I never do. However, considering the danger, I remind you that these are not the anonymous streets of London, and I forbid you to second these young people into a Lillywith branch of the irregulars.

HOLMES: *(Coyly.)* Mrs. Cray! Would I? I merely point out that an astute young woman and two boys bent on exploring will naturally pick up things that may be of great value. As a force, I promise to make no more use of them than as pacemakers, for walks around the estate as I regain my strength. Mmm?

HOLMES looks to others and gets ready nods.

HOLMES: But if they do happen to learn things—

CRAY: Such as?

HOLMES: *(Shrugs.)* Well, such as who might have come new to the vicinity in the past couple of days.

RUDY and RORY both start to speak, canceling each other out. They engage in a contest of politeness, each urging the other to go first.

RUDY: Grandmother received a letter yesterday from man... Professor Somebody. Bateman?

RUDY looks to RORY, who shrugs.

RUDY: I'll check. Anyway, he said he was in the area on a matter of local historical research, and might he have an interview and possibly consult the manor records. I don't know where he's staying.

RORY: And there's that nice looking... there's that Miss Rye. She's arrived in the last two days and is staying at the Cap and Bottle.

HOLMES: Good. And her business?

RORY: Don't know. But she was out walking yesterday... and again this morning.

JANE: And if we are talking about new arrivals, there is Reverend Munton. Though I gather he was sent for.

HOLMES looks for more, then turns to CRAY.

CRAY: Our curate was severely injured in a mishap. Our vicar is infirm and cannot manage alone. I gather the diocese sent this...

JANE: Mr. Munton.

CRAY: ...as a temporary. *(To RUDY.)* I hope he presents himself to Lady Bisset. Your grandmother...

RUDY nods, rolling his eyes.

HOLMES: Three... four if you count Yours Truly. And none sound as if they were preceded by more than a day's warning. That seems rather a lot for a sleepy place like this.

CRAY: Oh...

HOLMES: Yes.

CRAY: Well... Smith the Smith. He had a new man in his yard yesterday. Looked like a motor mechanic. I don't recall him being announced. But this is a heavy time for farm equipment breaking down... or so I believe.

HOLMES: So... four newcomers. Well let's see... I know I can rely on Miriam Cray to find out about the motor mechanic and the appealing Miss Rye. Rudy, if this professor presents himself at the Manor, you and Rory can observe him. And as for the itinerant parson: if he's true to his ilk, he will present himself before too long. Now...

HOLMES sits up and turns. JANE assists him.

HOLMES: I think I have had quite enough country air for one afternoon.

CRAY: I daresay. And hero worship. Boys?

HOLMES stands. RUDY steps up to him, offering a hand.

RUDY: A great pleasure, sir.

They shake, then RORY steps up.

RORY: I hope we haven't been a nuisance.

RORY and HOLMES shake hands.

HOLMES: No. It's time I was active again... and I always start with the mind. *(Turns left, then halts and looks back to RUDY and RORY.)* Tomorrow, the physical recovery starts, eh? After lunch? You can escort me on a short walk around the estate.

RORY and RUDY: *(As one.)* Yes sir!

HOLMES starts left, accompanied by JANE and CRAY. RUDY and RORY drift right.

HOLMES: *(Softly, with a chuckle.)* I hope that isn't a mistake.

CRAY: Of course it is. They'll badger you, and tramp you off your feet.

HOLMES: You might be right. Jane, will you join us? I feel you have a moderating influence.

RUDY: *(To RORY.)* What did I miss while I was inside?

JANE: *(With a smile.)* A pleasure, Mr. Holmes.

RORY: *(To RUDY.)* Nothing. He just said he thought the man who was after him was someone called Basil Zaharov.

HOLMES and party continue left. RORY continues right. RUDY stops.

RUDY: *(In raised voiced.)* Are you joking? Uncle Basil!

HOLMES, CRAY, JANE, and RORY stop and turn, looking at RUDY. Lights down.

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

AT START: *Lillywith Manor Woods. The next afternoon. Dappled light up, the occasional bird tweets in the distance. There is a stump or lumber to be used as a seat, left. A body is concealed under a pile of old leaves, far right. There is a crash of brush, well off.*

JANE: *(Well offstage, left.)* Boys!

RUDY: *(Offstage, left.)* I don't think that's unreasonable.

Enter RUDY and RORY, left. Each carries rough walking sticks. They will stop near the seat and wait.

RORY: We'd better wait here.

RUDY: *(With irritation.)* That's my intention.

RORY: *(With conciliatory fatigue.)* Look, I'm sorry I brought it up. I didn't mean to upset you.

RUDY: And all I was doing was pointing out that I've known Uncle Basil longer than you have. He was a guest at the castle... and I quizzed him about Sydney Reilly.

RORY: It's not my fault that his name came up while you were in the boot room. I had no idea that you knew him. *(Drops his voice.)* Or that it was so important to you. So... *(Sighs.)* I am happy to concede that Uncle Basil wasn't your uncle before he wasn't my uncle.

RUDY: Thank you.

There is a pause. RUDY shakes his head and smiles.

RUDY: Sorry old man. It's just I felt like a fool the way you were all looking at me. I got the distinct feeling you doubted my veracity.

RORY: That's why you got your grandmother to vouch for you last night! Ah. I understand now.

HOLMES: *(Offstage, left.)* Yes, here they are. Thank you.

RUDY: (*Leaning close, smiling.*) Good. I know I have a reputation for extravagance when I'm talking about myself. Fortunately Grandmother has always been ready to back me up. The rest of the family considers her my partner in crime... or me hers.

Enter HOLMES and JANE, left. HOLMES is fatigued and pauses to lean on his walking stick.

JANE: (*To RUDY and RORY, cross.*) What became of your pledge to be considerate?

RUDY and RORY: (*Almost as one.*) Sorry.

RORY motions to the seat. HOLMES advances.

HOLMES: When I was their age my pledges were powerless against sudden enthusiasms. (*Sits.*)

JANE: And I am sure you learned by correction. Should we start back?

HOLMES: I... I'm not sure. (*Considers.*) The head has stayed clear. Let's rest a moment. Rory... no... Rudy... you were going to report on this Professor Bateman... or Bateson. He has been sighted?

RUDY: (*Frowns.*) Bateson. Came by this morning. We were on the roof. Grandmother was off in the dogcart fussing at one of the farms. He left his card with Nickleson... the butler. Said he might call back late today. We saw him arrive and tore off down the stairs, but he was well down the drive.

HOLMES: How did he come?

RUDY: Bicycle.

HOLMES: What else did you observe?

RUDY: Well... (*Looks to RORY.*) Keeping in mind, we were up high... I'd say average to smallish. Gentleman's tweed walking suit.

RORY: (*Nodding.*) And a cloth cap.

HOLMES: Age?

RUDY: Well... not young... but I couldn't tell more.

HOLMES: (*Considers, then shrugs.*) Well... it's a start. But you must not be out of position if he should come back. When we are finished, you must be home and wait. If he does arrive, intercept him before he sees Lady Bisset... and you are to be as precocious and annoying as you like.

RUDY cocks his head.

RORY: Just as you were when you met me.

HOLMES: Of what is he a professor, and whence comes he? What is his present study and how did he hear about Lillywith. You are to make as if curiosity is your *raison d'être*. Do you follow? Be as annoying as you like, but not challenging. Behave as if you are so eager to ask the questions you are not listening fully to his answers. He should find this annoying enough not to have time to suspect your motive.

RORY: How should I be? Not the same?

HOLMES: No... you are over-awed by your partner here... practically mute. That will allow you to concentrate on his answers and the way he answers.

RORY: (*Grins and nudges RUDY*). That's in case you're too busy play acting to take it all in.

HOLMES clucks out a laugh.

HOLMES: Now this is the most important thing. Neither of you are to betray the slightest suspicion toward this man, or in anyway take exception to any answer he gives. He is probably exactly who he claims to be. But if he is not, then he is very clever. Do nothing to provoke his curiosity.

JANE: And say nothing about Mr. Holmes... and nothing about Mrs. Cray.

HOLMES: Unless he happens to ask about the "visitor". If so... she has some convalescing guest staying with her... probably a relative.

There is a pause. RUDY and RORY nod.

HOLMES: Good. Oh... and for heaven's sake, get me the exact text of his visiting card. Copy it if you must, steal it if you can.

RUDY grins.

HOLMES: And make sure he is staying at the inn.

RORY nudges RUDY.

JANE: Aunt Miriam should find out something about that while she's snooping after Miss Rye.

RORY: *(To RUDY.)* Tell him about the other newcomer.

RUDY: Huh?

RORY: This morning? The telegram?

RUDY: *(Catches on, explodes with excitement.)* Oh! Yes, yes, yes! *(Turns to HOLMES.)* Peter is coming! Isn't it wonderful?

HOLMES: Is it?

HOLMES and JANE exchange mystified glances.

RUDY: Peter is... he's positively ripping!

RORY: *(Sighs.)* He was like this when he told me. It took him ages to steady down. When he finally did, what I got from him was—

RUDY: All right... get to the point, Rudy, yes. *(Grins.)* But he is a ripping fellow! He's the youngest son of the Duke of Denver, he's left school and is about to go off to the university. And he's come down tomorrow for a short visit.

RORY: And?

RUDY: And? Oh! And he's the chap who got me interested in criminology.

There is a pause. HOLMES closes his eyes, opening them as he speaks.

HOLMES: A duke's son... a criminologist? Boys: the next generation of the English nobility cannot all be detectives. All the younger sons cannot be virtuous. The bookmakers will grow destitute, and the clergy will have no one to point out for the correction of the middle classes.

JANE: I don't think the upper classes will stint us in that regard. And according to my father, the middle classes are closing the gap in bad examples.

RUDY: He will go spare when he meets you. (*Looks to RORY.*) We're not going to tell him. We will just bring him by the lodge... casual as you please... to meet Miriam and Jane. Oh... and by the by... this is their guest... etcetera.

JANE: I don't think Miriam would approve of you using Mr. Holmes as your private showpiece. I'm sure Mr. Holmes does not relish the idea.

HOLMES: Holmes is indifferent... but willing, so long he gets his report on Bateson. My head is on the mend. My brain craves data!

RORY drifts up and right, then notices something on the ground. RUDY drifts right.

RUDY: We'll provide it, sir.

JANE: I think we should head back to the Lodge. (*Looks about.*) I am all turned around. What's the direct route?

RORY crouches low, cocking his head as he examines the forest floor. RUDY looks downstage, shouldering his stick like a rifle and offering a salute as he looks out.

RUDY: That way, ma'am!

RORY: (*Softly.*) What the deuce? What's been dragged here?

RORY follows the trail slowly to the right, moving slightly down stage. RUDY stabs at the ground, moving right toward the mound of debris.

HOLMES: I suppose you are right. I feel well enough. But when the fatigue comes, it comes swiftly. I will follow your lead, young lady.

RORY pauses, following the trail with his eyes until his gaze rests upon the mound. He cocks his head, trying to make sense of something he sees there. RUDY pokes at the mound.

RUDY: All right then. We'll go to the big house, and watch out for this professor. What...?

As RUDY pokes at the mound in curiosity, RORY recognizes what he looking at; his eyes grow big as he bleats out a warning.

RORY: *(A heavy whisper, in alarm.)* Wait!

RUDY lifts a naked arm out of the mound, exposing it long enough for all to see. He drops the stick and backs away, horrified and fascinated. JANE and HOLMES are transfixed.

JANE: Mr. Holmes...

HOLMES: *(With calm intensity.)* Yes. I see it.

JANE: *(Softly.)* Oh... dear lord!

Swallowing hard, RORY moves toward the body. JANE calls out in panic; HOLMES will cut her off by holding up a hand.

JANE: Rory!

HOLMES stands, his eyes on RORY and RUDY as they now both advance. When JANE also steps forward, HOLMES'S expression goes to a set smile.

HOLMES: Careful where you step gentlemen. Rudy: very carefully remove your stick.

RUDY looks to HOLMES, then reluctantly does what he is bidden. RORY leans down briefly, then straightens, looking away in horror; he fights off his revulsion and looks down again. JANE stops, shakes her head, and looks away.

JANE: Wickedness!

HOLMES: Yes.

RORY looks to JANE, his face full of regret.

RORY: You may not wish to come closer... his face... it isn't all there.

RUDY: I think I'm going to be sick.

HOLMES: No you're not. You're a detective.

RUDY: Don't detectives get sick?

HOLMES: (*Snorts a grim laugh.*) If they do, they take themselves off.

RUDY looks to HOLMES, who nods off, right. RUDY takes himself away, coughing, off right.

HOLMES: Visceral reactions aside. You observe a scene. There is always much to learn. The body of a murder victim has no power to horrify you. The power it possess is in what it has to say about how it came to be here. The ground is not haunted or cursed; it is engraved with clues to bring a murderer to justice.

JANE and RORY remain transfixed.

JANE: It must be murder, mustn't it?

RORY: There is a small wound at the back of the head. But the front!

RUDY returns, taking several deep breaths.

HOLMES: (*To RORY.*) What does it suggest?

RORY: From my experience of hunting... I would say a shot gun... but the entry is so small.

JANE looks to RUDY.

RUDY: False alarm.

HOLMES: A soft-nosed lead bullet... fired from a very powerful weapon.

JANE: A needless, contemptuous gesture.

HOLMES: Perhaps. Or perhaps it accomplished something else. Rudy... what else is remarkable about the body?

RUDY: Well... it's naked from the waist up. Not even a vest.

HOLMES: And since that is an unlikely state for the living, what does it suggest, especially when coupled with the obliteration of the face?

JANE: Identification.

RORY: Of course. Nothing to identify the poor man.

RUDY: The shot might have been lucky that way, but to strip him as well...

HOLMES: Excellent! I must congratulate each of you on your composure. You are excellent observers, and your demeanors will dismay your families throughout your lives. But alas, this event will demand more from each of you. And the most difficult part may be the period of silence I must beg you to observe. Are you game?

HOLMES looks to each in turn and they nod.

HOLMES: Right. Rory: that was a drag mark you discovered, was it not?

RORY looks at the ground behind him. Then turns back and nods.

HOLMES: Good. Then you and Rudy please track it back to its beginning. If you find evidence, please don't touch it. Slow and careful.

RUDY and RORY nod gravely and begin moving upstage very slowly.

HOLMES: Miss Jane.

JANE: Yes.

HOLMES: I must have a closer look at this fellow. Will you keep watch? And while you do, will you contemplate this? This has to be a secret discovery for a little. But there is one person, I fear, we must tell.

JANE: Aunt Miriam.

HOLMES leans over the body to begin his examination. He will continue to examine through the remainder of the scene.

HOLMES: Yes. Can you help me think of a way to do so? Because when she hears that I found a body in the company of a bunch of juveniles, and that I not only let them examine the scene I also proposed concealing a capital crime and suborned you all to do the same... I am afraid what her forthright nature might... might...

JANE: I believe what you are trying to say is that she will have kittens.

HOLMES: (*Snorts a laugh.*) A prodigious litter. I know that Watson would, were he here. The thing is, after twenty year, I can cow Watson... bully him as necessary.

JANE: But Miriam... yes, I see. Well... you will have to let her have her say. But if you explain to her what I'm sure you are going to explain to us... and she sees you have my support...

HOLMES: Thank you.

There is a pause.

JANE: This is not a... different case... a coincidence? It is definitely related to your case?

HOLMES: Definitely. And we owe it to this poor fellow that he provides the turning point. And I am confident that he will.

JANE: I'm afraid he has. His legs. He's wearing gaiters.

HOLMES: Gaiters?

HOLMES looks down at the body, then looks skyward in recognition. Lights down.

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