

# *The Real Sherlock Holmes*

## *The life and work of Arthur Conan Doyle*

A play by Cenarth Fox  
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Original production  
Encore Theatre Company  
Melbourne Australia  
Director Kevin Trask  
The M'am - Louise Whiteman  
Sir Arthur - David Small  
Sherlock Holmes - Kirk Alexander

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# The Real Sherlock Holmes

## *The life and work of Arthur Conan Doyle*

*“Perhaps the greatest of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries is this: that when we talk of him we invariably fall into the fancy of his existence ... but Sir A. Conan Doyle, the eminent spiritualist of whom we read in the Sunday papers, the author of a number of exciting stories which we read many years ago and have forgotten, what has he to do with Holmes?”*

T.S. Eliot

*“Sherlock Holmes, the greatest man who never was.”* Orson Welles

## **A play by Cearnth Fox**

Creator of *Nursing Holmes, Sherlock, Stock and Barrel, The Hound of the Basketballs* and *The Schoolboy Sherlock Holmes* and the novel *Sherlock Holmes – Playing the Game*

*“We thoroughly enjoyed the play and congratulations on your research which produced such a lively, informative and entertaining show.”* **The Sherlock Holmes Society of Melbourne**

*“A well-researched play which reveals so much about Conan Doyle ... I loved it, a super night, warmly recommended”*  
**Curtain Up**

*“A great production, booked out of course, with a fascinating display of Holmes and Doyle memorabilia. We did so enjoy the performance of The Real Sherlock Holmes. It is a wonderful play.”* **Brighton Theatre Company**

*“I’ve greatly enjoyed reading The Real Sherlock Holmes - now I want to see it performed! May you go from strength to strength!”* Roger Johnson **The Sherlock Holmes Society of London**

*“The world premiere of The Real Sherlock Holmes was a marvellous success. We got great reviews and made money.”*  
**Encore Theatre Company**

*“The Real Sherlock Holmes was so interesting and worthwhile, I have recommended it to all our other venues. Everyone who saw it was absolutely thrilled.”* **Roseville Village**

*“It was fantastic; history with humour. We just didn’t want it to end. Congratulations on your superb script.”*  
**Peridot Theatre Company**

*“If ever there was a great night of theatre it would have to be The Real Sherlock Holmes. What a wonderful adaptation of Sir Arthur Conan’s Doyle’s life. Your casting was excellent as they portrayed their characters so well. Congratulations on a great show. I’ve listened to the CD 12 times and every time I listen I hear something different.”*

**Brian Amos - Radio Eastern 98.1**

# The Real Sherlock Holmes

## *The life and work of Arthur Conan Doyle*

Once the world's most famous author and one of the world's most famous people, today Sir Arthur lives on through his creation, the world's most famous detective and, arguably, the world's most famous fictional character – ever!



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### **Introduction**

How many fictional characters are more famous than their creator? Is Shylock better known than Shakespeare? Is Miss Haversham more popular than Dickens? Sherlock Holmes is arguably the world's most popular fictional character and is certainly recognised far more than his creator Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle. But why?

Doyle was a prolific author, a knight, poet, playwright, theatrical producer, first-class cricketer, historian, politician, confidant of royalty, prime ministers and a US president, public-speaker, spiritualist, traveller, war-correspondent, general-practitioner, medical-specialist, army doctor, inventor, private-detective, boxer and seal and whale hunter. Doyle was once one of the most famous people in the world. So why does Holmes outshine Doyle?

There is an ever-growing amount of Sherlockian films, plays, books, articles and paraphernalia. But without Doyle, Holmes would not exist. The character is nothing without the author. *The Real Sherlock Holmes* is about the lesser-known creator of the very well-known creation.

### **First Performance**

*The Real Sherlock Holmes* was first staged by Encore Theatre Company Inc in Melbourne, Australia in September 2004. The director was Kevin Trask with the cast being [Sir Arthur] David Small, [Sherlock Holmes] Kirk Alexander and [Mary 'The Ma'am' Doyle] Louise Whiteman.

### Characters

**Arthur Conan Doyle [ACD]** – an author

**Sherlock Holmes [SH]** – a consulting detective

**The Ma'am** – mother of ACD

**Sir Arthur** was born and bred in Edinburgh. He was a big man. 6'2" [188cm] and 15.8 stone [100kg] would be close to the mark. He died in 1930 aged 71. In this play he is old, a touch poorly, with large moustache and a face of experience. His drive and determination is outstanding. He is a proud gentleman.

**The Ma'am** was small, lively and Irish; short-sighted, determined and well-educated; a plump little hen.

**Sherlock Holmes** was tall, thin with narrow face, exaggerated movements. He lived for many years in London.

### Accent and Appearance

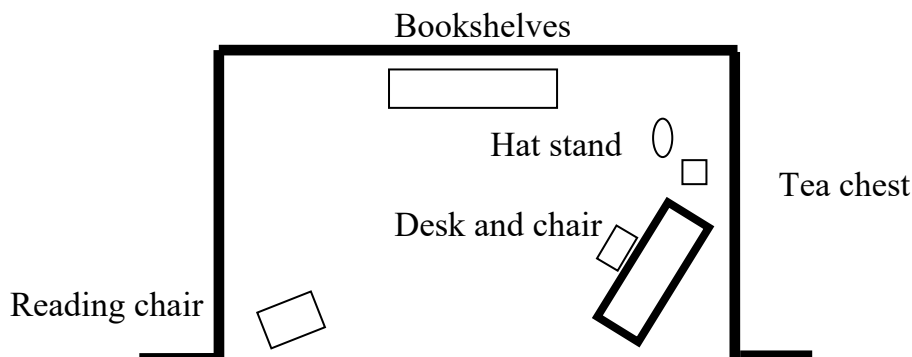
When playing a real person, it is not essential to look and sound exactly like that person. However, the actor playing ACD should capture the well-known characteristics of the man – he was well-spoken, believed strongly in many causes, was not afraid to express his opinion and never backed down. Mr Holmes has appeared on stage and screen portrayed by many actors of various shapes and sizes. He is self-confident, intelligent and widely read. Some would say his strong personality would clash with Sir Arthur's. The Ma'am was a pocket battleship. She was nearly 22 when Arthur was born, the third of ten children she produced and the first son.

### Costumes

This is a period piece [1880s-1920s] and the actors should dress accordingly. Sir Arthur was a gentleman in the original sense of the word and dressed as such. In this play he could wear a grey suit, waistcoat, collar and tie or a more casual jacket. Holmes could wear a black three-piece suit and don a cape and deerstalker for several outdoor scenes e.g. the play's opening, the Reichenbach Falls and Dartmoor. There are numerous published photos/drawings of Conan Doyle and Holmes and at least one of the Ma'am.

### Set Design

The writer suggests only one set – a study although many other places are described e.g. Baker Street, Edinburgh University, Portsmouth, the Arctic, Flanders, etc. You can build a realistic study; a combination of the different studies occupied by Sir Arthur, or simply decorates your black-draped performing space. Props to decorate your space include sporting trophies [stag's head, mounted fish], antique weapons, stuffed birds, billiard cues, skis, paintings [several members of the Doyle family were artists], soccer ball, cricket bat and larger items such as a bearskin rug, desk and chair, bookshelves, etc. There are published photos of Sir Arthur in one of more of his studies if you wish to use authentic detail. Here is a suggested design of your set. Alternatively you could simply decorate your performing space with Victoriana and Sherlockian photos and paraphernalia or use few if any props.



### The Script

Most, if not all, the historical events in this play actually took place. The dialogue and plot are invented.

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*[Shortly before the play begins you could play some music – popular tunes of the late 19th century or some solo violin music a la Sherlock Holmes. House lights and music coming down cross fade with FX of modern day traffic, sounds of Baker Street London. Not too loud. Lights up on bright summer's day. Crowd [the Ma'am as tourist] admire a statue covered with a cloth. A woman in Victorian dress watches. ACD, as a sort of MC/storyteller, calls for attention and addresses crowd]*

**ACD** *[As MC]* Ladies and gentleman. In Victorian England, here in Baker Street, London lived a truly, great man. Today, in 1999, *[Reaches for cloth]* I have much pleasure in unveiling this statue of the world's most famous fictional detective ... Sherlock Holmes.

*[Cloth removed in single movement - it is only on the front of the statue - to reveal "living" statue of Sherlock Holmes played by SH. He is in traditional garb holding pipe. He stands on small box/stand giving him extra height. He is frozen. Woman in crowd upset]*

**Woman** *[Played by the Ma'am - polite but definite]* Boo. *[Could continue]*

**ACD** *[Still MC. Surprised]* Booing? Madam how could you object to so fine a resemblance?

*[Woman moves forward so she and ACD are either side of the statue]*

**Woman** *[American accent]* Listen Mister, I haven't come from America to have my hero insulted.

**ACD** Madam, we adore this man.

**Woman** The word used was "fictional".

**ACD** *[Thrown]* It's a wonderful likeness.

**Woman** *[Anger rising]* I definitely heard you say "fictional!"

**SH** *[Without moving]* You'll never win.

**ACD** *[Shocked. Looks up at SH. Now as ACD]* Holmes!?! *[Tourist delighted]*

**SH** *[Breaking out of freeze and stepping down]* Sherlockians, sir, are true believers. *[To woman]* You would agree with that, Mrs. Hudson?

**Woman** *[Collecting cloth. Now Mrs. Hudson]* Oh indeed Mr. Holmes. And there's a gentlemen waiting to see you. "Most important," he says.

**SH** *[Picks up statue base, preparing to exit]* Then come dear lady, the game is afoot.

*[Mrs. Hudson picks up cloth and exits with Holmes. FX of traffic fades. Bright outdoors becomes ACD's study. Concentrate lighting on desk]*

**ACD** *[Moves to desk and handles items speaking as he does so. Throughout play, ACD could place certain items in tea chest which is upstage of his desk. He handles a black armband, pith helmet, stethoscope, old boxing-gloves, ancient cricket bat, etc. ACD is now ACD]* I believe every septuagenarian male has an obligation to sort his belongings before he passes over. I'm doing just that. *[He sorts]* My name is Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle. I passed to the spirit world in 1930 and being a spiritualist, can communicate with loved ones here on Earth. *[Ma'am enters carrying book]*

**The Ma'am** I found that book, Arthur, the one you loved as a child. *[She sits and searches book for part to read]* Come on, I haven't got all day. *[ACD moves to his mother]*

**ACD** My mother gave me my love of books. She always read to her children, *[copies Ma'am's approach to reading]* dropping her voice to a horror-stricken whisper.

*[ACD beside her. The atmosphere is charged as she reads to her son]*

**The Ma'am** "The brave knight rode forward. He believed in honour, justice and chivalry. *[Softer]* A hush fell over the crowd; the dogs and horses were still. *[Gradual crescendo]* Then suddenly the spectacle exploded. Swords flashed in the sun – steel true, blade straight - and with a ferocious roar, the battle began!" *[She hops upstage to bookshelves/stove]*

**ACD** Books were my passion. I devoured them. I read so much the local library introduced a Conan Doyle rule.

**The Ma'am** *[Quotes rule]* "Books may not be changed more than twice a day." *[Mimes stirring pot]*

**ACD** My remarkable mother had her nose in a book while stirring the supper when, as a wee laddie, I'd come home from fighting some snotty-nosed, rich kid.

**The Ma'am** *[Distressed, goes to him]* Oh Arthur. Mother of Mercy. *[She examines his bruises]*

- ACD** Ah, never mind, Ma'am ... *[They speak together, happy memories]*
- ACD/Ma'am** ... you should see the other boy. *[They enjoy the memory then she breaks off]*
- The Ma'am** Pack your bag, Arthur, we're moving again.
- ACD** We moved seven times before I was ten. My father was poorly and with Irish Catholic parents, I joined the Jesuits at boarding-school in Lancashire.
- The Ma'am** Now don't forget to write.
- ACD** *[To her]* In my lifetime, I wrote to my small, short-sighted, Irish mother, more than one thousand, five hundred letters.
- The Ma'am** *[She nods]* You did indeed. That's a lot of stamps and a lot of love. *[They could embrace or kiss then she breaks off to help him tidy his belongings]* Now enough of that. You're off to boarding-school.
- ACD** You know we were watched day and night by the Jesuits? They made cracks in the walls so biting winds would keep us alert. Lessons were boring and it was you, Ma'am, who gave me my love of history. You were a huge influence on my life.
- The Ma'am** *[Repeating the advice she gave long ago]* You can do anything, Arthur. Believe in yourself and greatness is yours for the taking. *[Almost an aside]* Just behave for those Jesuits.
- ACD** *[Picks up strap]* Alas I failed *Good Behaviour*.
- The Ma'am** *[Worried]* Oh Arthur! Not the trolley!
- ACD** The Jesuits used a thick piece of india rubber. *[ACD hits hand or desk]* One whack on a freezing February morning and your hand would double its size.
- The Ma'am** *[Distressed]* God in heaven!
- ACD** *[Whacks desk again]* The minimum was nine.
- The Ma'am** *Nine!* Stop belting me boy!
- ACD** *[Whacks desk again]* And with nine on *both* hands, apart from the incredible pain, your main problem was opening the master's door.
- The Ma'am** *[Collecting scarf from hat-stand, happy memories]]* Ah, now this you wore on your first visit to London.
- ACD** *[Likewise happy]* Oh yes, to see my aunt and uncle.
- The Ma'am** You saw the Tower, St Paul's, the Abbey and at the theatre Sir Henry Irving in *Hamlet*.
- ACD** And to think that one day I would write for the great man.
- The Ma'am** You loved the hansom cabs and those gas lit streets with villains and history on every corner.
- ACD** *[Sniffs]* And don't forget that certain fragrance from two hundred thousand horses.
- The Ma'am** You went to Madam Tussaud's in Baker Street with all those gruesome murderers.
- ACD** I did. *[Picks up bible]* And would you look at this. My first communion. *[Concerned, remembers]* I nearly became a *priest*.
- The Ma'am** The Jesuits offered a fee reduction if I'd let you take holy orders.
- ACD** I was horrified when a wild Irish priest thundered, *[Imitates Irish priest]* "Anyone who is not a Roman Catholic will surely go to Hell."
- The Ma'am** You made the right decision, Arthur. Medicine at Edinburgh university and you could live at home. *[Starting to exit]* My advice was simple. "Wear flannel next to your skin and *never* believe in eternal punishment". *[She exits]*
- ACD** I couldn't bear to think of great men of letters writhing in flames. Surely a God of love would not allow that. Darwinian ideas were new and my faith was under threat. But I was lucky. My university teachers were inspirational. *[SH enters as Bell and prepares to address the students]* Professor Joseph Bell made the greatest impression. He was brilliant at observation.

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- Bell** *[Played by SH using Scottish accent]* Gentlemen, observe if you will. *[Bell produces vial. This could be mimed]* Here is a foul liquid. *[Bell sniffs and recoils]* You know I never ask my students to do something I myself have not done. *[Bell places finger in vial then finger in mouth. He grimaces. Holds vial so ACD can taste liquid]* Kindly copy gentlemen. *[ACD tests liquid by cautiously placing index finger in vial then in his mouth. It is revolting. ACD in distress]*
- Gentlemen, not one of you observed that while I placed my index finger *[indicating]* in the awful brew, it was my middle finger I placed in my mouth. *[Quick demonstration]*
- ACD** *[Groaning at his mistake but recovering]* Later I became his clerk and would usher his patients. *[ACD becomes visitor and sidles centre-stage unsure of situation]*
- Bell** This man is a left-handed cobbler. You'll observe, gentlemen, the worn places on his corduroy breeks where a cobbler rests his lap stone. The right-hand side is far more worn than the left ergo he hammers with his left hand.
- ACD** *[Shaking his head and moving to other side of Bell]* We were amazed. Then another chap arrived. *[ACD becomes new arrival]*
- Bell** This man is a French-polisher. *[Pause]* Oh come now. Can you no' smell him?
- ACD** Joe Bell was an inspiration. His lectures were packed. One day a woman appeared with a small child and carrying a coat.
- Bell** I observe Madam you come from Burntisland, you walked along Inverleith Row, you left home this morning with two children and you work in the linoleum factory.
- ACD** All true. The woman was shocked and so were we. But how did Bell know?
- Bell** You have a Fife accent and the nearest town is Burntisland. The red clay on your shoes is found only in the Botanical Gardens by Inverleith Row. The coat you carry is too big for your present child meaning it's for another you have presumably left with family or friends. And the dermatitis on your right hand is common to linoleum workers in Burntisland.
- ACD** My university professor was the model for my famous detective, Sherlock Holmes. In one story I introduced a red-headed chap called Wilson and had him say ....
- SH** *[Bell is now Holmes. No longer Scottish]* Do you mind?
- ACD** *[Awkward pause]* I was going to mention my words in the story about ... *[Overlap speeches]*
- SH** Your words? Come now, Doyle. We must be accurate.
- ACD** *[Challenges him]* I hope you're not going to be difficult.
- SH** *[Takes over]* It was my scene, my character, my dialogue in my room. Now pray be seated.
- ACD** *[Angry]* But damn it, Holmes, this is *my* life story.
- SH** *[Anger rising]* Sit! *[ACD sits in chair as Wilson. SH observes him]*
- Wilson** *[Unhappy but too polite to refuse. Still ACD]* I presume I'm the red-headed man?
- SH** *[Ignores ACD. Assumes control]* Beyond the obvious fact that you have at some time done manual labour, that you take snuff, are a freemason, have been to China and written a considerable amount, I can deduce very little.
- Wilson** *[The red-headed man rises shocked. No longer Scottish]* Mr. Holmes! How, in the name of good-fortune, did you know all that?
- SH** Your right-hand is quite a size larger than your left and your muscles more developed.
- Wilson** Yes, I once worked as a carpenter.
- SH** There are snuff marks on your person and you affect an arc-and-compass breastpin.
- Wilson** My freemasonry. But the writing?
- SH** Your right cuff is very shiny and the smooth patch near your left elbow is where you rest it upon the desk.
- Wilson** Amazing. But China?



- SH** The fish tattooed above your right wrist has the scales stained a very delicate pink – that is quite peculiar to China. Plus there’s a Chinese coin on your watch-chain. *[Slight pause]* I think I’ve made my point. *[Sweeping Sherlockian exit. At door as Bell]* Do not simply look at a patient, Doyle, but feel him, probe him, listen to him and smell him. Observe. *[Exits]*
- ACD** *[Picks up or spies item from his whaling trip. Could be woollen hat]* Ah, my own ripping yarn. I was studying to be a doctor when a fellow student quit his job as ship’s surgeon. Would I go in his place? *[Putting on scarf and/or cap]* Would I ever?
- The Ma’am** *[From offstage. Fiery]* Arthur! *[Enters]* You’re doing what?
- ACD** *[Excited]* I’m off to hunt seals and whales in the Arctic.
- The Ma’am** *[Angry, shocked]* For seven months!
- ACD** I’ll make a fortune, Ma’am.
- The Ma’am** But I have plans for you, my boy, big plans. *[Despairing]* Oh Arthur!
- ACD** *[To audience]* Killing helpless seals seemed callous and cruel and at sea I could hear the Ma’am calling.
- The Ma’am** And for God’s sake don’t be adventurous.
- ACD** I tried seal hunting. I killed the animal then made a fatal error. I stepped backwards *[Enacts the scene]* and slipped into the icy water.
- The Ma’am** Arthur!
- ACD** *[On his knees in the water]* Death closed in. *[Mimes the story]* My limbs were numb. I grasped the ice. My hands slipped. Panic. I clawed frantically but failed. The world would never hear of Sherlock Holmes.
- The Ma’am** *[Can’t stay in Scotland a minute longer. Rushes forward offering hand]* Arthur! Quick now! Give me your hand!
- ACD** *[Ignores her but calls as if she is “God”]* Oh Ma’am. I’m drowning in the Arctic Ocean.
- The Ma’am** *[Invoking heavenly help]* Save him, God. Have mercy on a poor Catholic woman. *[Retreats]*
- ACD** I grabbed the dead seal’s flipper and inch by inch dragged myself from the sea. Then, as if to punish me for taking its life, the seal began sliding towards me. I was being driven into the ocean by the very creature I’d slaughtered.
- The Ma’am** *[Begging the Almighty]* Oh please, God. Help me darling boy.
- ACD** I got an elbow on the ice and hauled myself free.
- The Ma’am** *[Crossing herself]* Thank you, Lord. Thank you.
- ACD** *[He stands shivering]* My clothes were like armour but the Ma’am still had her son.
- The Ma’am** And remember, Arthur. The ship’s doctor has nothing to do with hunting whales.
- ACD** *[Excited]* I joined the whale hunt. *[Ma’am despairs]* Six men in a boat. *[Sits in reading chair and mimes holding an oar]* The harpooned monster towered above our tiny craft. *[Frozen with fear looks up at whale]* It raised a massive flapper. We froze waiting for death. The whale paused and *[rowing]* we rowed for our lives.
- The Ma’am** *[Back to normality]* There’s a clean towel in your room, Arthur.
- ACD** *[Happy]* Back home I hid fifty gold coins and loved watching the Ma’am discover them.
- The Ma’am** *[Ma’am mimes finding gold]* Oh Arthur. This is wonderful. Wonderful.
- ACD** During summer I took part-time work and wrote letters to friends and family.
- The Ma’am** And your letters were so vivid. People suggested you should write for money.
- ACD** I did and was thrilled when I sold my first short story.
- The Ma’am** Three guineas! *The Mystery of the Sassassa Valley.*
- ACD** *[Mock-serious]* About this time the Ma’am, God bless her, took me aside for a serious chat.



- The Ma'am** Arthur, it's time you learnt about sex.  
**ACD** *[Gentle mocking]* Boy was I lucky. Sex-education from an Irish, Catholic female.  
**The Ma'am** It's a fact of life, Arthur; some women use their sex to influence men.  
**ACD** I was once in love with five women, simultaneously.  
**The Ma'am** You idjit.  
**ACD** And I was deadly serious about a Miss Elmore Welden.  
**The Ma'am** Dump her.  
**ACD** I took my medical degree and became the doctor on a ship bound for Africa.  
**The Ma'am** *[Stronger]* Dump her.  
**ACD** Miss Welden was mortified and I literally sailed out of her life.  
**The Ma'am** *[Proud]* I was so proud of you, Arthur. My boy is a doctor.  
**ACD** *[Sweating]* And in the steamy, tropical heat with the ship at anchor, I dived into the cool sea.  
**The Ma'am** *[Rushes forward and looks into the sea and gives warning]* Arthur, look out! Behind you!  
**ACD** I hurried back on board then saw the circling shark. *[Peers overboard]*  
**The Ma'am** I forbid you to go anywhere near water.  
**ACD** Three times I could have died at sea.  
**The Ma'am** But you survived and returned to Edinburgh where times were tough. Remember? *[He nods. Sombre, serious]* Your father had a real problem with the drink and epilepsy. *[Pause]* I had no choice but to send him to the asylum.  
**ACD** *[Distressed]* That should not have happened! My father was not insane!  
**The Ma'am** *[Equally distressed]* I know that. And yes, it was terrible. But sometimes, whatever you do, the pain is unbearable. *[Pause. Refers to letter]* There's a letter from London. *[Ma'am could collect letter]* Now you face a tough choice. *[ACD reads letter]* Your wealthy uncles want to give you a medical practice.  
**ACD** *[Staggered]* In London?  
**The Ma'am** They'll tell their Catholic friends to become your patients.  
**ACD** This is incredible.  
**The Ma'am** It's the chance of a lifetime.  
**ACD** I've no money, no job, no prospects and now this.  
**The Ma'am** You can become a successful London doctor.  
**ACD** *[He wants her advice]* What am I going to do?  
**The Ma'am** *[She's staying right out of it]* Don't ask me. It's your choice.  
**ACD** *[Help me]* Ma'am?  
**The Ma'am** And whatever you decide, there will be consequences.  
**ACD** *[Decides]* I can't accept it.  
**The Ma'am** Can't? But what will you say?  
**ACD** *[Speaks his letter of reply]* "Dear Aunt and Uncles. I cannot accept your kind offer because I am ... agnostic."  
**The Ma'am** You need to think about this, Arthur.  
**ACD** There's nothing to think about.  
**The Ma'am** Your aunt and uncles are devout Catholics. They're ageing and childless. You're their professional nephew, their hope of the Doyle dynasty. And now you're not only rejecting their sincere and handsome offer but doing so on religious grounds. That's stupidity and sacrilege.  
**ACD** All right, I'll do the decent thing.  
**The Ma'am** *[Concerned]* You mean, you *will* accept?  
**ACD** I mean I will tell them in person. *[Worried]* Fancy facing my father's three successful brothers.  
**The Ma'am** Just be brave, Arthur.

- ACD** I'll be in the room where my grandfather, John Doyle, entertained Thackeray, Scott, Disraeli, Wordsworth, Dickens and many other great men of letters and world affairs.
- The Ma'am** Your father and I will be proud of you, Arthur.
- ACD** But not my uncles. *They'll* be angry, and so will I.  
*[Ferocious, ACD spins round to face his powerful relations]* But if I practised as a Catholic doctor, I'd be taking money for professing to believe something I don't believe. I'd be the worst scoundrel on Earth!"
- The Ma'am** *[Moves or has moved surreptitiously behind him to coach her son. He's the doll, she's the vent]* They'll say something like, "If only you would have faith".
- ACD** *[To uncles]* That's what people keep telling me. They talk about having faith as though it could be done by an act of will. Reason is the highest gift we've got; we must use it.
- The Ma'am** Then they might ask something like, "And what does reason tell you?"
- ACD** *[Still angry]* It tells me the evils of religion have all come from accepting things that can't be proved. It tells me this Christianity of yours contains a number of fine and noble things mixed up with a lot of arrant rubbish.  
*[Pause. Ma'am moves to desk. The silence of the London room is very loud]*
- The Ma'am** *[Almost a whisper]* That's about when your Aunt will ring for tea. *[She rings small bell]*
- ACD** The silence was deafening. Refreshments were consumed in a room bristling with anger. Had I thrown away the chance of a lifetime? Was I a complete fool?  
*[Atmosphere change. Back in Edinburgh]*
- The Ma'am** You were when you took that job in Plymouth. Get out, Arthur, and work on your own.
- ACD** I did get out of Plymouth and moved to Portsmouth as a solo GP. I had ten pounds and a brass nameplate. I rented a house, bought tenth-hand furniture and waited. *[Dramatic pause]* And of patients came there none.
- Ma'am** Remember your uncle sent a letter of introduction to the Catholic Bishop of Portsmouth.
- ACD** I burnt it.
- The Ma'am** Well, whatever you do, Arthur, don't neglect your writing.
- ACD** In case I missed a patient, I did my shopping, housekeeping and exercise at night. A few patients arrived, I kept writing short stories and some were even published.
- The Ma'am** You must persevere.
- ACD** I was so poor I pawned my watch.
- The Ma'am** And don't be too proud to barter with your patients.
- ACD** *[Remembers]* The grocer paid me in butter and tea. He suffered fits and I'd *[demonstrates looking in shop window]* peek in his shop window to see if he was *[twitches]* twitching.
- The Ma'am** *[Happy]* But then along came the *Cornhill Magazine* and a nice, fat cheque.
- ACD** Oh I really *was* a writer when I sold *Habakuk Jephson's Statement*. Twenty-nine guineas.
- The Ma'am** One critic thought your story compared favourably with Poe.
- ACD** *[Laughing]* But only because they didn't publish authors' names.
- The Ma'am** And another said your story was *probably* written by Robert Louis Stevenson. *[The Ma'am and ACD laugh at the mix-up. "Stevenson! Ha!" Holmes enters. The Ma'am sees Holmes and suddenly stops laughing]* Mister Holmes! You're too early. *[Going to usher him out]* I'll come and fetch you when the time is right.
- SH** *[Having none of that]* A word, sir, if you please.
- ACD** But Holmes, I'm not yet up to detective fiction.
- SH** Damn it Doyle. No-one's interested in your mediocre medical career or your unknown, piffling prose. *I'm* your *raison d'être*.
- The Ma'am** Don't be bullied, Arthur; and certainly not by an Englishman speaking French.

- SH** *[Caustic mimic]* Ooooo, don't be bullied, Arthur. *[Aside]* Not even by a pushy, Irish mother.
- ACD** *[Angry]* How dare you, sir!
- The Ma'am** *[Changing the subject]* What happened when you started meeting people, Arthur?
- SH** *[Sarcastic]* Oh yes, social chit-chat. Fascinating.
- ACD** *[Not pleased with SH]* I joined the cricket and football clubs and the Portsmouth Literary and Scientific Society. The minute secretary was a Dr Watson.
- SH** *[Annoyed]* Yes but *the* Doctor Watson was then in Afghanistan.
- ACD** At this time a young man had meningitis and was near death. I offered a spare room.
- SH** Very commendable, Doyle. Now, about me.
- ACD** He died a few days later.
- SH** Right. Funeral's over. Let's talk Holmes.
- The Ma'am** Arthur, I've decided. It's time you were married.
- SH** My God, she *is* a control-freak.
- ACD** And by helping the dying patient, I met his sister Louise. I called her Touie.
- The Ma'am** She'll do, son.
- ACD** The Ma'am consented. Touie and I were wed and life was never better.
- SH** Never better? Your life hasn't even begun.
- The Ma'am** As a married man you were more acceptable to female patients.
- ACD** And with Touie's small allowance we were perfectly content. But more so than ever, I wanted to write.
- SH** Hallelujah!
- ACD** Short stories meant cash but literary greatness came from a novel. I read some detective stories then tried writing one – only I wanted something fresh and different.
- SH** *[Touch hammy]* The greatest detective awaits his cue.
- ACD** *[Moves to desk, puts pipe in mouth, picks up pen. Lighting highlights desk. ACD thinks aloud and dips his pen in ink bottle miming writing as he thinks. He ignores the others They are nearby to prompt]* I need a man with intellect ... Joe Bell! He used observation to diagnose patients. Why not a detective using observation to solve mysteries?  
*[Excited, he writes quickly pausing every so often to think]*
- SH** Many say I'm confident with a dry wit and acerbic tongue.
- ACD** Confident with harsh tongue.
- The Ma'am** A detective who doesn't rely on the stupidity of the criminal.
- ACD** No guesswork. A detective using science.
- SH** When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life.
- ACD** A clever man living in London who triumphs over adversity.
- SH** *[Pleased]* I rather like myself.
- The Ma'am** Now remember the names of the characters are very important.
- ACD** So, narrator ... Ormond Sacker.
- SH & Ma'am** *[Ridicules]* Ormond Sacker?
- ACD** No, pretentious. Something uncomplicated, friendly. *[Gets idea]* Watson. Doctor James ... *[crosses out]* no, John. Doctor John H. Watson.
- The Ma'am** Ah, sure, it's easy to get confused with James and John.
- ACD** Now the detective. Hope. Sheridan Hope.
- SH** *[Ridicules]* Sheridan No-Hope.
- ACD** Not Hope, Holmes. Sherrinford Holmes.
- The Ma'am** Sherrinford?
- SH** I don't think so ... Ignatius.
- ACD** Not Sherrinford. Who was that Chief Inspector here in Portsmouth?
- SH/Ma'am** *[a la Chinese whisper]* Sherlock. Sherlock. Sherlock. Sherlock. Sherlock. Sherlock ....
- ACD** *[Suddenly inspired]* Sherlock! *[Excited he writes]* Sherlock Holmes.

- [Holmes and The Ma'am exchange smiles]
- SH** And now the real story begins. The protagonist, the leading man, the hero stands ready.
- ACD** [Lighting returns to normal and the writer moves from his desk. Excited] I wrote my first Sherlock Holmes novel in a few weeks. I was full of hope. It was some of my best work.
- SH** The world discovered its greatest detective.
- The Ma'am** [Anxiously hopeful] We prayed it would bring literary greatness.
- ACD** I sent it to the *Cornhill Magazine*. [Sadder] But back it came.
- SH** [Shocked] It came back!?
- The Ma'am** [Quoting] "Sherlock Holmes is too short for a book and too long for a magazine."
- ACD** I sent it to another publisher who returned it unread.
- SH** [Incredulous] Unread?
- The Ma'am** I remember your letters. "My poor Sherlock Holmes has hardly been read. Literature is such a difficult oyster to open. But I'm sure all will come well in time. I have sent Sherlock Holmes to another publisher."
- SH** [Anger and incredulity] Another publisher? Don't they know who I am?
- The Ma'am** Finally Holmes found a publisher but hardly a fortune.
- ACD** Twenty-five pounds and they got complete ownership of the copyright
- SH** [Aghast] Twenty-five quid!
- The Ma'am** And they were so busy they wouldn't publish for at least a year.
- ACD** So, several rejections, one ordinary offer and Sherlock Holmes finally appeared in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*.
- SH** [Ham announcement] And now begins the greatest adventure of all.
- ACD** [The next big thing in his memories] Spiritualism.
- SH** [Incredulous] Spiritualism?
- The Ma'am** [Upset] Oh no. [Holding head?] Oh noooo.
- ACD** In Portsmouth, I discovered spiritualism.
- The Ma'am** [Embarrassed. Speaks intimately] Arthur. This is embarrassing.
- SH** [Dismayed] Please, not the séances.
- ACD** I went as a neutral observer and became curious.
- SH** Supernatural hogwash.
- ACD** In one year I read seventy-four books on spiritualism. I was seeking the grand religion. In 1887 I published my first Sherlock Holmes story and my first article on spiritualism.
- The Ma'am** [Worried] And I faced another family crisis. Is my son a religious loony?
- ACD** And all the while Sherlock Holmes was not exactly a best seller.
- SH** What!?
- The Ma'am** Very few critics reviewed the tale.
- SH** That's outrageous.
- ACD** I moved from detective stories to historical novels. [Holds novel]
- SH** You fool, Doyle. They'll never sell.
- ACD** I chose the Puritans and wrote *serious* literature. With high hopes, I sent *Micah Clarke* to publishers.
- SH** And they said, "How could you waste your time on history?"
- The Ma'am** "Mica Clarke lacks a love interest." [ACD deflated] "Your novel has no interest at all."
- ACD** [Shattered] I spent ages researching and writing this book. I could be the next Walter Scott. Are publishers blind? [His spirits revived by his mother handing him a letter]
- The Ma'am** And then after almost a year of rejections, Longmans made an offer.
- ACD** [Reading, suddenly outraged] Cut one hundred pages!
- The Ma'am** [Joyous] Oh Arthur, your life is complete. I'm going to be a grandmother!
- [The Doyles celebrate. Holmes is not part of the family celebrations]
- SH** [Annoyed] Hey! [They ignore him] Hey! What about me?

- ACD** Our daughter Mary was born, delivered by her father, my novel *Micah Clarke* won rave reviews and life was wonderful. [*Excited, faster*] I now knew my calling. Historical novels.
- SH** Historical nonsense.
- ACD** I began writing *The White Company* and was in full flight when I received an extraordinary invitation from America.
- The Ma'am** Take care, Arthur. American copyright laws are very unfair.
- SH** Indeed. Gilbert and Sullivan operas were rushed across the Atlantic for a New York production with not a penny for the British creators.
- ACD** *Lippincott's*, the American publisher, stole my first Sherlockian story but now faced a problem. Holmes and Watson were popular and American readers wanted more.
- SH** Hard to comprehend. [*The Ma'am looks at him*] Americans being so culturally perceptive.
- ACD** Would I consider writing more Sherlock Holmes?
- The Ma'am** Oh, yes, Arthur, yes.
- ACD** This time I had it over the publisher.
- SH** And all because of the character.
- ACD** Oscar Wilde raved about *Micah Clarke*.
- SH** And about me.
- The Ma'am** Be firm with the money, son.
- ACD** The Americans offered a substantial fee and *I* retained the copyright.
- SH** [*Keen to get started*] So what about my second case?
- ACD** I quickly wrote *The Sign of Four*. So quickly, Doctor Watson's war wound moved from his shoulder to his leg.
- The Ma'am** [*Is she serious?*] That was a clever ploy to amuse nitpicking Sherlockians.
- ACD** But in Britain the second Sherlockian story faded almost as quietly as the first.
- SH** [*Keep clam*] It's all right. I was a slow burner in Britain.
- The Ma'am** Sherlock Holmes was like the prophet, not recognized in his own land.
- ACD** *The White Company* was published by the *Cornhill Magazine* and I found my true vocation - historical novels.
- SH** Do you honestly believe in a hundred years people will have even *heard* of them?
- ACD** [*Standing up to Holmes*] I want to be a serious novelist.
- SH** [*Retorts*] Serious or successful? Come on, man, what's in the Doyle bank account?
- The Ma'am** Yes, Arthur, he's right. We all need money.
- ACD** [*Reflective. Nodding*] And I'll never make money as a GP. [*Brightens*] But I will as a specialist so went to Vienna to study ophthalmology.
- The Ma'am** Your German was passable but the technical terms were confusing.
- ACD** [*Disappointed*] It was hopeless. I couldn't understand the lectures.
- SH** Herr Doktor, du bist ein Dumkopft.
- ACD** I left Vienna and moved to London as an eye-doctor.
- SH** 19th century medicine meant you could practice without certain qualifications.
- The Ma'am** I'm sure you were very good, Arthur.
- ACD** Prescriptions then could be lethal. Doctors went home mid-operation or prescribed such things as a bottle of whisky and a pretty nurse.
- SH** Well this is quite fascinating Doyle but how about we travel from Harley Street to Baker Street?
- ACD** Can you believe I had not one patient?
- The Ma'am** Good.
- ACD** Good?
- SH** She means you'll have plenty of time to write my adventures.
- The Ma'am** I'll proof them, Arthur. Send me your ideas and drafts.

- ACD** I had a wife and child to support and young sisters to consider. My income from writing was promising but ... [*Slaps hand on desk*] Damn it! I'll abandon medicine and write fulltime. [*The Ma'am and Holmes delighted. Do they dance?*] I found a literary agent and began an amazing journey.
- SH** Come, Doyle, the game is afoot!
- ACD** I wrote a Sherlock Holmes short story called *A Scandal in Bohemia*. My agent sent it to a new magazine, the *Strand*. The editor was delighted.
- The Ma'am** [*Sharing his excitement*] You got thirty-five pounds and they ordered five more.
- ACD** I was thirty-two, bought a large London house and was researching a new novel.
- SH** Forget it, forget everything except me. I am about to take off.
- ACD** Once you appeared in the *Strand Magazine*, the response was staggering.
- The Ma'am** Overnight Sherlock Holmes became a real person.
- SH** [*Offended*] I am a real person.
- The Ma'am** People went to Baker Street, discovered there was no 221B and thought you'd made a mistake.
- SH** He *did* make a mistake. In those days there *was* no 221B.
- ACD** Gentlemen in clubs, bus drivers, housewives, families – people everywhere were reading and talking about Sherlock Holmes.
- The Ma'am** Your stories increased sales of the *Strand* by one hundred thousand copies a month.
- SH** [*Almost scoffing*] No, no, no. It was *much* more than that.
- The Ma'am** And the publishers panicked. They ran out of new stories and demanded more.
- ACD** [*Upset*] But I have more important tales to tell. I'm a *serious* novelist.
- SH** And a serious fool. When will you learn? *I'm* your meal-ticket.
- ACD** [*Twigs*] Then an idea. I'll charge fifty pounds per short story and the *Strand* will run a mile.
- SH** [*Holmes laughs/scoffs*] But they didn't and immediately agreed to your demands.
- ACD** [*Realises*] My God! If I work hard I'll make the average man's annual income in two days!
- SH** [*Pointing to desk*] Well come on, get cracking; and as difficult as you can. Watson and I love a good challenge.
- ACD** [*Sits at desk, lights dim, he writes*] I worked into the night and sent each new story to the Ma'am for comment.
- The Ma'am** I like that one about the giant rat from Sumatra.
- ACD** Short stories are hard work. I finished two then two more. Holmes took over my life. He became a major irritation. I wanted to write quality novels. [*Excited*] Suddenly I knew how to rid myself of Mister Sherlock Holmes.
- SH** Careful, Doyle. I have powerful friends.
- ACD** In the last story, the detective will die.
- The Ma'am** [*Distressed*] Arthur, no!
- SH** [*Outraged*] Over my dead body!
- ACD** I told only the Ma'am. *She* would understand.
- The Ma'am** [*Well, he miscalculated there*] Are you insane? You won't! You can't! Never!
- ACD** But he keeps me from my superior novels.
- Ma'am** [*Dismayed*] Oh no! My son is a literary snob.
- ACD** [*Shocked*] Ma'am!
- Ma'am** The people adore Sherlock Holmes.
- SH** So let's see, Doyle. Against dumping the detective there's your mother, agent, publisher and readers. Oh plus Watson and yours truly.
- The Ma'am** [*Don't forget Mrs. Hudson*] And Mrs. Hudson. [*SH agrees*]
- ACD** [*Anger rising*] But then, to rub salt in the wound, my historical novel was reviewed in terms of [*Indicating SH*] that penny-dreadful detective.

- SH** Look, just how stupid are you, Doyle? It's *because* of me your boring historical novel got reviewed in the first place.
- ACD** You're treading on thin ice, Holmes. Or maybe it's some treacherous moorland bog?
- SH** Cryptic. I like it.
- The Ma'am** [*Calming him*] Dignity, Arthur. Remember you now move in exalted company.
- SH** Oh yes, your new pals, the famous writers J. M. Barrie and Jerome K. Jerome.
- ACD** I sent a short play to my boyhood acting hero, the great Henry Irving. He loved it and the boy from the poor flats in Edinburgh was moving up in the world.
- SH** And all thanks to me.
- ACD** I was busy, happy, well and life was grand until ... [*Angry*] I got another damn letter from the *Strand*.
- The Ma'am** Well come on, Arthur; your public awaits.
- ACD** [*Goes into nasty but quiet rage*] I'll fix the *Strand* once and for all.  
[*Goes to desk and mimes writing furiously*]
- The Ma'am** Careful, Arthur. Write in haste, repent at leisure.
- ACD** [*As he writes*] "I will write *another* twelve Sherlockian short stories. My fee ... *one thousand pounds!* [*Slaps desk*] That'll stop the odious Mr. Holmes.
- SH** [*Laughing*] Oh dear. I deduce their reply will read, "Dear Sir, We agree to your terms and await the stories as soon as possible."
- ACD** [*Hugely frustrated*] Ahhhh! [*His roar of frustration is overtaken by music*]  
[*FX Short piece of music from a well-known G&S opera. ACD moves to collect boater. SH is lit as narrator. The Ma'am exits. The music fades/finishes as SH is speaking*]
- SH** Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas were enormously popular in my day but once, when the creators fell out with producer Richard D'Oyly Carte, he hired the diminutive Scot, J. M. Barrie. But Peter Pan's creator tripped on some writer's block and sent Doyle a delightful Holmesian message. [*Hands card to ACD who reads*]
- ACD** "Come at once if convenient. If not, come anyway."
- SH** Barrie was writing the libretto of *Jane Annie*. He and Doyle had both written for the stage but never a comic opera. I'm no critic so I'll leave you to decide if our scribes have a hit on their hands.  
[*Spot fades on SH who exits. SH changes into cap and deerstalker. ACD performs the show-stopper from Jane Annie*]
- ACD** *Their conduct's praised. We are amazed  
Miss Sims doth sympathize.  
Now let us sing of this wonderful thing,  
With a hyp-hyp-hypnotize!*
- [*He gets carried away and enjoys dance break over coda finishing with a flourish. He returns boater and plays down any applause*]
- All right, so Barrie and Doyle were not West End stars. But I had a dozen new Sherlock Holmes' stories to write and Touie gave birth to our son, Kingsley, and in Switzerland I saw the majestic Reichenbach Falls. It was awe-inspiring and worthy of something momentous. [*Lights begin to dim*]
- SH** [*Enters*] Careful, Doyle. That pathway is slippery. Stay back from the edge.
- ACD** Back home the pressure increased to finish the latest Sherlockian stories. I decided. Enough was enough. I told only the Ma'am.
- The Ma'am** [*Enters*] What's that? What did you tell me?
- ACD** At the end of the last story, at the mighty Reichenbach Falls, Sherlock Holmes will die.
- The Ma'am** [*Big reaction*] Oh you stupid boy!



- SH** You would kill the goose that lays your golden eggs?  
**ACD** The comic opera flopped. My dear father died in a Scottish asylum and my wife, who was the last person to fuss, complained of pains.
- The Ma'am** *[Suddenly distressed]* Arthur, my boy, I'm so very sorry. Is it really TB?  
**ACD** How could I, of all people, not have noticed the symptoms?  
**SH** *[Sombre, trying to be helpful]* They say the Swiss mountains are helpful.  
**The Ma'am** *[Exiting]* I'll go and pack your cases.  
**ACD** I took Touie to the fresh air of Davros and had plenty of time to write.  
**SH** For me of course. Now what's all this nonsense about Swiss waterfalls?  
*[Atmosphere darkens. FX Waterfall sounds perhaps. The men address one another]*  
**ACD** You've ruined the master criminal, Holmes. Professor Moriarty is furious. He faces the rope and wants you dead.  
**SH** *[Confused]* Just a minute. A moment ago *you* were going to kill me and now it's Moriarty. You *both* can't kill me.  
**ACD** *[Advancing slowly]* Ah, a conundrum, Holmes. But can you solve it here within the mist? *[ACD turns upstage and turns up his collar. He's another person]*  
**SH** *[Sees ACD as Moriarty. Shock. Fear?]* Professor Moriarty! How fitting we meet in such spectacular surrounds.  
**ACD** *[As Moriarty]* I've chased you all the way from London, Mr. Holmes.  
**SH** Do mind your footing. The path is damp from all this spray.  
**ACD** *[Moriarty in full flight]* You're a dead man, Holmes.  
**SH** I see no pistol.  
**ACD** I need no gun. I'll kill you with my bare hands. *[Suddenly lunges at Holmes]*  
**SH** *[Struggling]* Not without a fight, you fiend.  
*[FX swells or dramatic music begins]*  
**ACD** I hate you, Holmes. Say goodbye!  
**SH** Never. Once immortal, always ...  
**The Ma'am** *[Enters worried, holding umbrella]* Mr. Holmes! Please! I beg of you.  
**SH** *[Struggling]* Keep back dear lady. The ground is treacherous.  
**The Ma'am** I cannot see through the mist. Who is it you are fighting?  
**SH** It matters not. My very life is at stake.  
**The Ma'am** Mr. Holmes, if you kill Moriarty you may survive ....  
**ACD** *[Struggle intensifies]* Get out of my life, Holmes Get out!  
**The Ma'am** But if you kill my son you'll never solve another case.  
*[Suddenly the fighters freeze. Pause then call as one]*  
**ACD/SH** We don't care! *[Suddenly the men disappear offstage in the misty darkness both giving a wild scream. The Ma'am moves towards centre nearly slipping on the wet path]*  
**The Ma'am** *[Frightened call]* Arthur? Mr. Holmes? *[Distressed]* Oh dear God. Holy Mother, I beg of you, let them be safe. *[Calls]* Help! Help! *[Pause then ACD enters adjusting attire]* Arthur?  
**ACD** *[Surprised]* Ma'am? What the devil are *you* doing here?  
**The Ma'am** Oh Arthur, thank God. But what of Moriarty and Sherlock Holmes?  
**ACD** They're dead.  
**The Ma'am** *[Shocked]* Dead? *Both* of them?  
**ACD** They fell off the path.  
**The Ma'am** You killed Sherlock Holmes?  
**ACD** *[Relieved]* I'm free of that damn detective, Ma'am. I'm free to write prestigious novels and truly make my mark on literature.  
**The Ma'am** *[Not happy, in a huff]* Well I hope you know what you're doing! *[Exits but turns at edge of Falls/stage]* And don't stay out in the mist.  
*[Exits. FX and music, if used, fade, atmosphere brightens]*

- ACD** My final Sherlockian story appeared with Holmes and Moriarty dead in Switzerland.  
*[Goes to collect the black armband]* I was abroad when the tale hit the streets.
- SH** *[Enters, genuinely surprised]* It's unbelievable, Doyle. There's a massive public outcry.
- ACD** *[Shocked]* I know. It's fantastic. Young men go to work wearing black armbands.
- SH** Queen Victoria is not amused.
- ACD** People are besieging the *Strand*. Twenty thousand have cancelled their subscription.
- SH** There's a mountain of hate mail.
- ACD** One letter began, "You brute!"
- SH** There are dozens of obituaries.
- ACD** *[Angry]* My dear father died in anonymity. You die and it's international front-page news!
- SH** Well what did you expect?
- ACD** I expected you out of my life! Forever! *[Calms down, removes armband]* Touie was no worse so we returned to Britain and moved to Surrey. *[Stooped, old woman enters]*
- SH** Surrey. Switzerland. Swaziland. Wherever you go, Doyle, I'll be there.
- ACD** *[Is hit by handbag from behind]* Ow! *[Spins round]* Madam, do you mind?
- Old Woman** *[Pointing at ACD. Threatening]* You killed Sherlock Holmes.  
*[She passes him taking another swing as she exits]*
- SH** Young and old, Doyle, they despise you. I am their hero murdered in cold blood.
- ACD** Well the Americans still love me. I will visit the United States and be a hit.
- SH** Yes, but why?
- ACD** Huge crowds will follow me, everywhere. I'll be swamped by adoring fans.
- SH** And all because of Sherlock Holmes. Face it man, my success is your success.
- ACD** Look, you're dead. Now go away! I'm writing my next significant novel.
- SH** And *Brigadier Gerard* will fall off his horse.
- ACD** But love will endure. Passionate, rapturous, fantastic love. And that's how I felt when I met the divine Miss Jean Leckie.
- The Ma'am** *[Enters. Reprimands]* Arthur. Come here at once. Immediately!
- SH** Oh dear. Who's been a naughty boy?  
*[Reluctantly Doyle moves towards Ma'am]*
- ACD** Ma'am, I can see you're not happy.
- The Ma'am** *[Serious. Whisper]* You're a married man with children. Your wife is dying.
- ACD** Love does not discriminate.
- The Ma'am** *[Drops her voice. No dirty linen washing in public]* I'm talking about reputation. Yours. Mine. You are a public figure, a highly-respected man of literature.
- ACD** Tell that to Holmes. *[Louder so SH can hear]* He thinks I'm a hack.
- The Ma'am** *[Anxiety rising]* Listen to me. You can't have an intimate relationship with any woman, love or no love, whilst you're married, and especially not when your wife is dying.
- ACD** *[Saddened]* I'm disappointed in you, Ma'am.
- The Ma'am** *[Taken aback]* What did you say!?
- ACD** Do you think I'd reject the code of honour you taught me and which I've practised all my life?
- The Ma'am** *[Silenced. Ashamed]* Oh. I'm sorry, son.
- ACD** I am in love with Jean; madly so. But I will do nothing to hurt Touie or shame you or my family. Because of you, Ma'am, I cannot behave dishonourably.  
*[Pause. They look at one another then nod in agreement]*
- The Ma'am** I struggled so much with your father. Life is often cruel. *[Sincere]* I give you and Jean me blessing. *[They nod again]*
- ACD** The fact that Touie is dying is irrelevant. She's my wife. I will give her the best of care and never once cause her sadness.
- SH** *[Addressing audience. Intimate]* Small family matter. Best not to intrude.

**ACD** Difficult times lie ahead. I must continue to write, care for Touie and put aside my passion for Jean. My young children will suffer with my mood swings. But one thing is certain, *[Looking at SH]* that sanctimonious sleuth is dead.

**SH** I hate to interrupt but when do we discuss my play?

**The Ma'am** I thought you said he was dead.

**ACD** His body expired but no-one told his ego.

**SH** You once wrote a play about me. It passed to an American actor who made it a triumph. Once again I was incredibly popular.

**The Ma'am** *[Happy times]* Oh yes, that's right, I remember.

**ACD** *[Despairs]* Ma'am, please; don't encourage him.

**The Ma'am** The actor wanted to change the script. What did he ask?

**SH** *[American accent]* "May I allow Holmes to marry?"

**ACD** I don't care. You're dead and buried. *[Angry]* "You may marry or murder or do what you like with him."

**SH** I can see why you're furious. The re-written play exploded. And here's me, a saturated stiff in Switzerland.

**The Ma'am** Charlie Chaplin had a part in your play. It was his first stage role.

**SH** The play was a colossal success in America, Britain and Paris and from it came radio adaptations and a movie. The more you kill me, Doyle, the more I come alive. This is not goodbye, this is adieu. *[Exits]*

**ACD** The winds of change were blowing. Queen Victoria's reign was ending and from Africa, the Boer War drums began to beat.

**The Ma'am** *[Almost threatening]* Now listen very carefully, Arthur. Do not even think about it.

**ACD** I'm forty, fit and healthy. I have much to offer.

**Ma'am** *[Furious]* I forbid you to volunteer. You are so wide and tall you will make an easy target.

**ACD** But I did volunteer and was turned down.

**Ma'am** Serves you right. Just remember. *[Threatening]* No adventures. *[Exits in huff]*

**ACD** I joined a field hospital en route to South Africa. I was back into medicine and serving my country. Touie was in no pain so off I went to war. *[Lighting could dim to single spot]*

The doctor in charge was an overweight Harley Street gynaecologist. Amazingly we never treated any soldier with shrapnel in his fallopian tubes. The other medico was a likeable Irishman whose sole aim in life was to marry a wealthy widow with a cough. *[Change lighting to eerie scene. Add FX of moaning, flies buzzing, gunfire]*

Our tented hospital covered the Bloemfontein cricket ground with its pavilion our operating theatre. There was a stage in the pavilion and on it, a set from *HMS Pinafore*.

Alas this boys'-own, ripping-yarn was filled with death and destruction. We saw horrific wounds but the real killer was disease. Our troops drank polluted water which sent wretched men scrambling to latrines. Many couldn't move. *[Perhaps add brief background music from HMS Pinafore played slowly or in minor key]* The Gilbert and Sullivan set was re-painted with faeces.

We wore pink undershirts to disguise the blood and stood in human filth. The stench was suffocating and flies drank from men's eyes. War is hell.

*[Slow change of FX. Reduce South Africa scene and cross fade with desolate Dartmoor]*

I studied conditions at the front line then returned to England with many ideas. I wrote a history of the war which sold thirty thousand copies with all royalties going to charity.

*[New setting in rural Devonshire. Holmes is close by but unseen]*

On the trip home, a chap told tales of Devonshire.

**SH** *[As the Hound with West Country bark]* Aroooo!

**ACD** I was fascinated and later went to the desolate Dartmoor.

**SH** *[Calling]* Mind the black mud, Doyle.

**ACD** *[Turns but can't see who is calling. Nervous]* I walked the bleak land with its wild weather and dangerous bogs.

**SH** *[Makes wolf howling noise]* Arooooo! *[Doyle again confused]*

**ACD** I found the perfect location for a chilling murder mystery but, damn, I had no detective.

**SH** *[SH coming down]* Doyle! What a pleasant surprise.

**ACD** *[Agrees]* Yes, all right. The story is ideal for Sherlock Holmes.

**SH** Except you threw me into the Reichenbach Falls.

**ACD** *[Emphatic]* I know you're dead.

**SH** Whereas if you'd kindly resurrect me, your Dartmoor dilemma will be solved.

**ACD** *[Sudden change of mood. Excited]* Of course. That's brilliant.

**SH** *[Playing Charades]* Right, I've got the first clue. You're excited.

**ACD** Holmes can solve the mystery with you still swimming in Switzerland.

**SH** *[Nodding]* Nice clue; definitely a three-pipe problem.

**ACD** *[Pooh-poohing]* I don't need you, Holmes. You can be dead and *still* work your magic.

**SH** *[Intrigued]* Now that is a novel twist to the suspension of disbelief.

**ACD** *[Triumphant]* I'll set *The Hound of the Baskervilles* before you went to Switzerland.

**SH** *[Impressed]* Oh very clever. So I'm in some Jules Verne time-machine?

**ACD** *[Will you be told]* Holmes, you are surplus to requirements.

**SH** *[Angry]* Well let's hope for your sake, this new Sherlockian mystery fails.

**ACD** Fails?

**SH** Oh use your brain, man. When I solve the *Hound* whodunit, my adoring public will demand my resurrection and then the only character in the Grimpen Mire will be you!

**ACD** *[Upset]* Damn, you're right. Failure for Holmes is unthinkable. If you're good and ...

**SH** If? If!?

**ACD** Yes, all right, let me think. I'm under enormous pressure.

**SH** *[Almost intimate, friendly]* You need a break, Doyle. Why not try Morris dancing or ornithology or, *[Gets ideal answer]* why not politics? *[FX crowd noises begin]*

**ACD** *[Is enthused]* Yes! I'll run for parliament. *[SH exits]* No safe seat and, as a Liberal, I'll contest a strong Labour constituency in my native Scotland. I'll speak on street corners, in breweries and factories and in halls filled to overflowing. Hecklers beware!

**SH** *[Ma'am and SH enter carrying placard not displayed as yet. As heckler]* Oi! Tell us about Baker Street, Sherlock Holmes! *[Hecklers heckle, jeer]*

**ACD** My popularity soared and the day before voting I was in with a big chance. Then came the dirty tricks.

**Woman** *[Scottish]* Hey! Wot about this, Sherlock? *[Woman and SH display posters as shown below]*

<b>Conan Doyle is a Papist! NO Catholics!</b>
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**ACD** Posters appeared overnight. Hatred of Catholics robbed me of a seat in the Commons. How ironic that I had long ago rejected the Church and its teaching.

- [Hecklers exit with placards. Holmes needs envelope in pocket for later]*  
But then our long-serving Queen Victoria passed over. I finished *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and for the last ten years my wife was dying while I had a platonic relationship with the woman I loved.
- SH** *[Enters as himself, excited]* Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is about to be set loose.  
**ACD** Do you realise it's nearly ten years since your last mystery?  
**SH** And when *The Hound* succeeds, you sir, have a serious problem.  
**ACD** Yes but what if it flops?  
**The Ma'am** *[Enters excited]* Arthur! Great news! *The Hound* is a hit! *[Excitement builds]*  
**ACD** A hit?  
**The Ma'am** *The Strand* has thirty thousand new subscribers.  
**ACD** *[Shocked]* You mean it's a massive bestseller? *[Nods and happiness from The Ma'am]*  
**SH** Wait till you see the American offer.  
**The Ma'am** You're the world's first blockbuster novelist.  
**ACD** You mean ... *[Ma'am nods]*  
**The Ma'am** ... the world still loves Sherlock Holmes.  
*[Sudden lighting change to dark and sombre. Mood darkens. Light ACD]*  
**ACD** But forget all this hoopla. Something made my blood boil. Journalists accused British troops of appalling war crimes in South Africa; monstrous lies. I spoke out.  
**SH** You had no trouble finding a publisher.  
**ACD** I wrote sixty thousand words in a few days rebutting every claim.  
**The Ma'am** Hundreds of thousands of Britons bought your book.  
**SH** A public fund raised money to translate the work into twenty languages.  
**The Ma'am** Copies went round the world.  
**ACD** My book caused newspapers to retract.  
**SH** You were paid nothing and profits went to charity. You sir, restored British pride.  
**ACD** Soon I was dining at the Palace. *[Lighting changes, brighter]* The King congratulated me on my war propaganda.  
**The Ma'am** *[Excited]* Oh Arthur, you're sitting next to the King. *[Sees his tie]* Your tie, Arthur, your tie.  
**ACD** I was offered a knighthood for services to my country.  
**SH** Well don't get too uppity, Doyle. Some of us would choose to politely refuse.  
**ACD** *[Has been thinking]* I must say, Holmes, I'm inclined to agree with you.  
**The Ma'am** *[Furious. She desperately wants her son to have the knighthood]* Arthur! To refuse is a grave insult to the King. *[In regal mode perhaps forcing ACD to kneel]* Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle, I command you to accept!  
*[SH could tap or mime tapping ACD on shoulder while the Ma'am collects pith helmet]*  
**SH** *[As King]* Arise, Sir Arthur.  
**ACD** *[Stands and puts on pith helmet]* So I became *Sir Arthur* as well as a Deputy-Lieutenant of Surrey - *[Models hat in mock fashion parade]* – whatever that means.  
**SH** And you were not amused when a parcel arrived for Sir Sherlock Holmes.  
**The Ma'am** *[Proud]* Now you have everything, Arthur. Wealth, prestige, title.  
*[Ma'am removes helmet]*  
**SH** *[Produces envelope]* But I gather you haven't seen this letter from America?  
**ACD** *[Upset. Taking envelope]* Since when have you been reading my mail?  
*[He removes letter, reads silently]*  
**The Ma'am** *[Thrilled]* America? Oh Arthur, is it from a publisher?  
**SH** *[Pause]* Anything to do with me by any chance? *[Ma'am takes and reads letter]*  
**ACD** *[Angry]* Damn you, Holmes. Damn you to hell!  
**Ma'am** *[Screams, trembling]* Oh my sainted aunt! It's incredible!  
**SH** *[Smug]* It is about me.

- The Ma'am** *[Reading]* “Dear Sir, If you can find a way to resolve the death of Mr. Holmes at the Reichenbach Falls and are prepared to write another six short stories involving the detective, for each new story, we will pay you ... five thousand dollars.”
- ACD** *[Stunned. Re-reads letter]* Five thousand dollars? Each? *[Looks at others who nod or smile. ACD mimes signing]* “I agree.”
- SH** You realise, Doyle, I’m currently at the bottom of a Swiss waterfall?
- The Ma'am** He’s right, Arthur. And you can’t change his name to Lazarus.  
*[Lights dim. Mood darkens. Holmes observes]*
- SH** *[Softer]* I observe, Ma’am, your son, the good Doctor appears troubled.
- ACD** *[Sombre]* In 1906, my dear wife Touie died. The doctors gave her months and she lived nearly thirteen years. She was my kind and devoted companion.
- The Ma'am** In the six months after Touie died, Arthur was miserable and ill yet received sixty letters a day including one from a desperate Birmingham solicitor.
- SH** George Edalji was jailed for seven years but released after three.
- The Ma'am** And this was due to a private detective’s skill and determination.
- SH** Indeed it was. But the detective in this real-life drama was a real-life writer, *[Indicates ACD]* Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.
- ACD** I met my client in a London hotel and behaved like any good detective. I observed.
- SH** Doyle knew at once the man was innocent.
- ACD** George Edalji, a young, black solicitor sat reading a newspaper. He wore thick spectacles to correct his severe myopia.
- The Ma'am** Edalji was convicted of slashing farm animals causing the wretched beasts to bleed slowly to death.
- ACD** I copied Holmes and re-traced the steps allegedly taken by my client.
- SH** In the pitch-black darkness of a rural Midlands night, Doyle negotiated fields, fences and hedges, climbed embankments, crossed railway lines and found and tethered terrified farm animals. Incredible.
- ACD** Yet that is what the short-sighted solicitor allegedly did before slashing the beasts with the skill of a surgeon. The charges were ridiculous.
- The Ma'am** But eliminating the impossible was not enough for our sleuth. He located a young man, known to the police, who worked in a slaughterhouse.
- SH** Doyle noted the dates of the offences and proved this suspect was abroad when the offences stopped.
- ACD** I proved the mud on Edalji’s boots was from the wrong area. I pointed to the shameful forensic mistake of putting Edalji’s coat in a contaminated bag. I observed. *[ACD exits]*
- The Ma'am** It was brilliant, elementary detection. My son exposed the racial prejudice of the Chief Constable and the illegal and flimsy case for the prosecution. Edalji was granted a pardon but no compensation.
- SH** Doyle kicked up such a ruckus that British justice was changed forever.
- The Ma'am** At the time, convicted persons had no right of appeal. Once a sentence was handed down, the criminal had to endure their punishment, including possible execution.
- SH** Now, thanks largely to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Britain established the Court of Criminal Appeal which today is a vital part of our system of justice.
- The Ma'am** And this was not the only real-life case solved by Sir Arthur. Due mainly to my son, a man wrongly convicted of murder, was both set free and paid compensation.
- SH** Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was a real-life detective and advocate of justice for all.  
*[Doyle enters brushing confetti from his clothes. The Ma'am quietly exits]*
- ACD** Are you still here? Back-stabbing me no doubt. *[Sees SH staring]* It’s confetti, man. The wonderful Jean Leckie has just made me the happiest chap in Christendom.
- SH** Congratulations, Sir Arthur. Now may we discuss your boxing?
- ACD** Boxing? I’m on my honeymoon!

- SH I believe you wrote a play which was rather daring.  
ACD Daring? It was revolutionary. Bare knuckle boxing, live on stage in a West End theatre.  
SH So now you're an entrepreneur?  
ACD My script called for seven sets and forty-three speaking parts.  
SH You're insane.  
ACD I took a six month lease on the Adelphi theatre at six hundred pounds a week!  
SH But then with me in the play you'll make an absolute fortune.  
ACD [*Building tension*] Didn't I tell you? You're not in the play.  
SH Oh come now, Doyle. Throwing away your hard-earned money is one thing. Cutting your throat is entirely another.  
ACD I'm breaking new ground, Holmes; sights never before seen on the London stage.  
SH You can show pink elephants on bicycles but without me you are nothing.  
ACD [*Happy memories*] Talk about high hopes. I couldn't wait for the first-night.  
[*Now the play has started its run*]  
SH So, opening night, Doyle. How did it go?  
ACD [*Excited*] Marvellous. Unbelievable. The play ended with the stalls cheering and the galleries delirious.  
SH [*Mock excitement*] Congratulations. And all without me.  
ACD [*Bitter, angry*] Sarcasm, Holmes, is the lowest form of wit.  
SH [*Hitting hard*] Your play had no love interest, no girl in danger and the violent boxing greatly offended women. But tickets didn't sell, old chap, because [*Emphatic*] I wasn't in it.  
ACD [*Morose*] And the King hardly helped when he chose that time to die.  
SH Simple solution, Doyle. Stage another play starring a much-loved, consulting-detective.  
ACD I've adapted your case of *The Speckled Band*.  
SH Excellent; with a real reptile of course?  
ACD I wanted a real one but the damn thing kept falling asleep. We used a model.  
SH [*Preparing for dramatic action*] And that realistic, rubber reptile became the star. [*Mimes thrashing reptile*] When Watson went a-thrashing, the audience gave an almighty cheer.  
[*Imitates audience. ACD could join in*] "Hoo-ray!" [*Pronounced hoo-rar*]  
ACD [*Thrilled*] Oh Holmes, my new play, it's sold out. I've re-couped all my losses and made a small killing.  
SH [*Sarcastic*] Remarkable. And to what do you attribute your stunning success?  
ACD [*Suddenly angry*] Look, don't push it, Holmes. I may have to re-think your early demise but there's nothing you can do to stop your rival.  
SH [*Indignant*] Rival! No-one can rival Sherlock Holmes.  
ACD In a Sussex quarry I saw fossils and giant lizard tracks. What if such animals were alive today?  
SH Your *if* is bigger than your giant lizards.  
ACD I've created your rival, Holmes. Professor Challenger. He's the star of my new novel *The Lost World*.  
SH *Lost* is appropriate.  
ACD And I've been invited to London to lunch with President Teddy Roosevelt.  
SH Where the first thing he'll ask is [*American*] "Tell me sir, how is Mr. Sherlock Holmes?"  
ACD [*Building case for his importance*] I've dined with prime ministers and the aristocracy.  
SH Yes, but why?  
ACD People everywhere ask me to solve mysteries.  
SH There must be a reason.  
ACD I now own a mansion so vast the billiard room doubles as a ballroom.  
SH And we both know why – don't we?



- ACD** Yes, all right, it's you! *[Pause as anger subsides]* Stop distracting me, Holmes. Can't you see the approaching war?
- SH** *[Genuinely serious]* I can, sir. *[Saluting]* Your country calls.
- ACD** *[Anxious]* Germany threatens and Britain is not prepared.
- SH** *[Pointing to soldiers offstage]* Sir Arthur! The army wants you to watch manoeuvres on Salisbury Plain. *[Hands over imaginary binoculars]*
- ACD** *[Shocked]* My God, Holmes, look! Those tactics went out years ago.
- SH** You tell them, sir.
- ACD** *[Yelling at colonels]* Stop wasting time marching and get stuck into rifle practice! And you officers, remove that frippery from your uniforms. Do you *want* to get shot?
- SH** *[Imitates officer waving, terribly pukka]* "I say. I'm an officer, shoot me first."
- ACD** I saw danger in new naval warfare – submarines. Britain was an island. We could be starved to death. I advocated a tunnel between England and France.
- SH** The British say you're mad. The Germans think you prophetic.  
*[FX Sounds of an unruly mob. ACD quickly looks outside. The Ma'am enters]*
- The Ma'am** Oh Arthur, it's those suffragettes. They're chaining themselves to the railings.
- ACD** *[Despairing]* Not again.
- The Ma'am** I'm surprised you aren't in favour of women's rights.
- ACD** I applaud their goals, Ma'am, but not their methods. Ladies should always be ladies.
- The Ma'am** Well they've just set fire to the cricket pavilion at Tunbridge Wells.
- SH** *[Sarcastic]* Oh my Lord. Not the cricket pavilion.
- ACD** *[Defending himself]* You know I strongly support reforming the divorce laws. I believe women should be treated fairly and with equality.
- The Ma'am** That's well and good, Arthur, but don't get stuck in the old-fashioned groove.
- ACD** *[Upset]* Ma'am!
- The Ma'am** Society's changing. The motor-car, aero-plane, telephone. Soon there'll be moving-pictures, radio and television. Don't be left behind.  
*[She stares at her son. ACD upset. Is he old-fashioned? Holmes comes up behind]*
- SH** The suffragettes may have a case, Doyle, but we are approaching the First World War.
- ACD** *[Snaps into former enthusiasm]* I wrote about a small, fictitious country called Norland and its fleet of eight submarines. Their plan was simple. Attack any ship carrying food to Britain.
- SH** Of course mighty Britain easily overpowered Norland.
- ACD** But not its submarines.
- SH** Britain was being starved to death and was forced to agree terms with tiny Norland.
- The Ma'am** You were much more than a story-teller, Arthur. You were a thinker. You guided politicians and the military.
- ACD** My story was called *Danger!* The *Strand* published it together with comments from naval big-wigs. They scoffed.
- SH** *[Imitates old-fashioned Admiral exiting as he speaks]* "More like Jules Verne than real life. And no civilized nation would ever torpedo unarmed merchant ships."
- The Ma'am** Your book was a blueprint of what really happened. The rules of war had changed forever.  
*[Ma'am collects cricket bat and hands same to ACD]*
- ACD** Back home in the summer of 1914 I helped form a group of volunteers, a sort of Home Guard. *[Handed bat]* I was Private Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.  
*[Stands to attention with bat as rifle on shoulder]*
- The Ma'am** You published pamphlets about civilian defence and started the first Dads' Army.
- ACD** Twelve hundred villages formed their own Home Guard.
- The Ma'am** *[Threatening]* But whatever you do, Arthur, do not volunteer for the regular army.
- ACD** *[Proud]* I volunteered.

**The Ma'am** *[Furious]* Arthur!

**ACD** *[Applying to join the Army]* I'm 55, a very good shot and have an *[Louder]* extremely loud voice *[Normal volume]* for drill work.

**The Ma'am** Thank God you were rejected.

**ACD** In our Sussex rose garden we heard the guns in Flanders. At night, zeppelins whirred overhead. I volunteered as an army doctor and was refused.

**The Ma'am** But Arthur, *your* actions saved countless lives. Remember the collars?

**ACD** We lost three cruisers and fourteen hundred men. I wrote to newspapers and the War Office suggesting life jackets. Within a week, a quarter of a million inflatable rubber collars were supplied to the fleet.

**The Ma'am** Heads of government took your advice.

**ACD** And if body armour worked for Ned Kelly, why not for British troops? I pushed hard for change and Lloyd George and Churchill agreed.

*[Lights change to dark sombre setting. Add sounds of gunfire, screams, etc. War atmosphere]*  
We could not comprehend the number of dead. In September 1915, in one week, the allies lost three hundred thousand men. I spoke out. *[Quoting his letters]* "Unprotected troops cannot pass a zone swept by machine-guns. Abandon such attacks or find protection for the men."

People were in disbelief. Not only were millions killed, many were never seen again.

**Woman** *[Plaintive cry perhaps offstage]* Where is my son?

**ACD** The Foreign Office sent me to Italy and France.

In the trenches I huddled with men who endured enormous hardship. I met my brother Innes and son Kingsley. Both brave men would soon be dead.

In Italy a shell whistled overhead and exploded just behind us.

My history of the British campaign ran to six volumes.

*[Holmes enters and is respectful]*

**SH** Doyle, I know it's a difficult time but why not let me do my bit for King and country?

**ACD** As in my story *Danger!* where Britain was starved by the tiny country of Norland, many people were afraid.

**SH** The world's greatest detective is British. Let me help. Please.

**ACD** Can you outwit a German spy?

**SH** *[Statement of fact]* I'm Sherlock Holmes.

**ACD** So the British sleuth triumphed and Britons felt good. I became the unofficial minister for propaganda.

**SH** Be careful, Doyle. France in 1918 is a mire of death. *[Exits quietly]*

**ACD** The Australians invited me to witness the attack on the Hindenburg line. On some field in France I saw unforgettable horror. Massive casualties.

*[Lighting slowly returns to normal and FX cease]*

These events kept me thinking about God and the meaning of life. Was there any sense in this carnage? Was there life after death?

*[Possible place for an interval]*

Thirty years ago, in Portsmouth, I began my search. I never stopped and now was certain we could communicate with those who'd gone before. *[Announcing his creed]* "Spiritualism is a hope for the human race. We can discover God through the psychic world."

- [Lights start slowly to dim] My son Kingsley was dead. Jean and I went to a séance. There was a strong atmosphere in the room. [Blackout. Emotional] “Is that you, son?”
- Kingsley** [Played by SH. Intense whisper] Father, forgive me.
- ACD** There is nothing to forgive. You were the best son a father ever had. Are you happy?
- Kingsley** I am so happy. [Holmes as Kingsley exits]
- ACD** During the séance I felt a hand press on my head and then a soft kiss on my brow. [Lights come up slowly. Séance is over] My son, my brother and the Ma’am all died within a short period but I knew, I *knew* they survived the grave.
- The Ma’am** [Enters or rises. Not happy] I may be dead, Arthur, but even I can see you’re about to shoot yourself in the foot.
- ACD** But Ma’am, this is what I’ve been searching for all my life.
- The Ma’am** You’ve achieved literary greatness. Continue with Holmes and a peerage awaits. Continue with spiritualism and you’ll become a joke.  
[ACD doesn’t agree. He’s now excited. He is starting a new adventure]
- ACD** Once the war ended, the spirit world dominated my life. I spoke all over Britain. In America I was the Saint Paul of Spiritualism. Of course many Americans poked fun.
- SH** [Enters as American news vendor] “Cigars and whiskey in paradise,” says Sherlock. “No sex in heaven!”
- The Ma’am** Arthur! Your reputation will be lost.
- ACD** Meetings were packed. Millions were in deep mourning. Someone with an answer to their grief was warmly welcomed.
- The Ma’am** [Skeptical] But many came to see the creator of Sherlock Holmes.
- ACD** [Ignores her] I was an evangelist and took my message to Africa, Scandinavia, Australia and New Zealand. In three years I travelled fifty-five thousand miles.
- SH** [Almost begging] Now Doyle, please, I beg you, do not mention that business with the photos.
- ACD** I was overseas when something unusual happened in a Yorkshire village. [Others react]
- SH** [Angry] Doyle!
- ACD** Two young girls discovered fairies in the north of England.
- The Ma’am** I warned you about being old-fashioned. Fancy a grown man believing that girls never tell lies.
- ACD** If the fairy photos are real, it’ll be greater than Columbus discovering the New World.
- SH** And if they’re not, you’ll tar us both with the same nonsensical brush.
- The Ma’am** The world thinks you and Mr. Holmes are one and the same person.
- SH** Our names are interchangeable.
- The Ma’am** Just because your ancestors came from Ireland doesn’t mean the little folk came too.
- ACD** I had the photos examined by experts, I interviewed people and after careful consideration declared, [Announcement] “Fairies are real!” [Others despair]
- The Ma’am** [Mocking, pointing] Oh, look, Arthur, there goes a pixie with your peerage.
- SH** [a la news vendor] Get your paper. [a la spruiker] “Sherlock Holmes is crazy!”
- ACD** [Defensive] But you both fail to mention I received hundreds of letters from people who shared my belief.
- The Ma’am** [Pretend greeting] Oh yes, and here they are. Come in Mr and Mrs Gullible.
- ACD** [Goes to fetch book] And this is my latest tome. *The Coming of the Fairies*.
- The Ma’am** The only thing coming, Arthur, will be the men in long, white coats.
- SH** This is grossly unfair, Doyle. Sherlock Holmes is logical and calculating. I scoff at the supernatural. Now you’re telling the world I’ve got fairies in the bottom of my garden.
- ACD** [Distressed. Old worries re-surface. Belief in fairies relates to his father’s “insanity”] You don’t understand. My father was a fine illustrator of fairies. But he was put in the asylum!
- The Ma’am** [Equally distressed] Arthur, your father was ill.

- ACD** Uncle Richard plastered his walls with pictures of pixies. Was he mad too?
- The Ma'am** *[Angry]* No! No! There was no insanity.
- ACD** If I can prove fairies are real, it will prove my father was normal.  
*[Pause. Silence. The emotion is palpable. The Ma'am is calmer]*
- The Ma'am** You do realise many years after your passing, the girls confessed the fairies were photos from a book? *[DOYLE doesn't want to know]*
- SH** It was so obviously a fraud even Watson could have spotted it.
- ACD** *[Trying to justify his beliefs]* People accept human voices travelling through the air on radio waves. Why can't spirit voices do the same thing? And why not little folk? Well?  
*[Pause. They don't want to argue with him. He's hooked on the supernatural]*
- SH** *[Changes the subject]* Look, old man, how about another case? Watson is still keen.
- The Ma'am** Yes, come on, Arthur. Mr. Holmes has been very good to you.
- ACD** *[Ignoring questions]* Do you know people have recently accused me of blasphemy?
- The Ma'am** *[An aside, softer]* And stark-raving lunacy.
- ACD** They say I'm the Devil and forget I'm the messiah of Spiritualism.
- SH** No, Doyle. You are the messiah of detective stories.
- ACD** *[Angry at Holmes]* Over forty years, Holmes, I wrote sixty stories about you. A nice round number. Most consulting-detectives would be grateful but oh no, not you.
- SH** So I'm stuck in Sussex looking after those damn bees? Is that what you're saying?
- ACD** Sixty's your lot, sir because I am about to pass to the other side.
- The Ma'am** *[Distressed]* Arthur!
- SH** I hear they've booked the Royal Albert Hall for your memorial service.
- The Ma'am** I'll be there, son, if only in spirit. *[Exits to become American tourist again]*
- ACD** Naturally *I* was there. The Hall was packed. An empty chair stood on stage for my spirit and with atmosphere electric, the audience was invited to stand for two minutes.  
*[Longish pause as they re-enact the scene]*
- SH** And the completeness of the silence was unforgettable.
- ACD** *[Another pause then ACD springs back into life]* But in the year I died, the famous Baker Street was changed. Upper Baker Street ran into Baker Street. The council removed the word 'Upper' and overnight Baker Street grew longer producing a real 221B.
- SH** Meaning millions could visit and write to a real address. No wonder I got out of London.
- ACD** But when the public and postman called at 221B, they found a bank manager who was none too pleased.
- SH** I received sacks of mail and fulltime staff replied to my fans around the world.
- ACD** So let's see. I'm dead, you're fictional and people are writing to a bank.  
*[Woman enters with small box which is placed centre]*
- SH** *[Nodding]* Byron was right. "Truth is strange, indeed stranger than fiction."  
*[Holmes stands on box and is again a statue minus the cloth. FX Traffic sounds as per 1999]*
- ACD** *[As ACD]* Recently a statue of Sherlock Holmes was erected outside the Baker Street tube station. Sherlockians gathered, many from overseas.
- SH** The speech began, I was unveiled and then, amidst the polite applause, came a very distinctive ...
- Woman** Boooo.
- ACD** Was the statue a bad likeness?
- SH** Was my pipe or hat the wrong shape or style?
- ACD** No. The speaker had uttered the forbidden word 'fictional'. To many Sherlockians, Holmes is real. They celebrate his birthday, visit his Baker Street home and travel to the Reichenbach Falls.
- SH** May I say something?

- ACD** *[Angry]* Just wait, damn you.
- Woman** *[With camera moving closer to statue]* This way, Mr. Holmes. *[Takes picture]* Thank you. *[Exiting]* And please say “hi” to Doctor Watson.
- SH** *[Almost dismissive]* Thank you.  
*[Woman exits. SH ignores ACD who is quietly fuming. Even now he’s being upstaged. Following speeches are direct to audience]*
- ACD** *[Determined to carry on]* My birthplace in Edinburgh is marked with a statue *[Indicating SH]* – of him. London, Japan and Switzerland each has another Sherlockian monument. My solitary statue stands quietly in a small Sussex town. My portrait is absent from gallery walls. Spiritualism continues with little reference to my massive contribution.
- But in contrast, Sherlock Holmes is arguably the most popular character in fiction - ever. Even in my lifetime, people wrote stories and books about Holmes. His name is a household word.
- SH** My cases have been translated into almost every written language known to exist.
- ACD** My stories are imitated in countless parodies and pastiches. There are now pastiches of pastiches.
- SH** Not to mention films, plays, musicals, ballets, articles, web-sites, cartoons, comics, advertisements, stamps and paraphernalia all starring – moi.
- ACD** Sherlockian societies litter the planet with a continuous supply of new devotees.
- SH** And as my star rises, his fades or sleeps quietly in the shadows.  
*[It’s time to call it quits. Both men have had enough of fighting]*
- ACD** *[Addresses Holmes]* It appears, Holmes, we have the perfect love/hate relationship.
- SH** *[Collecting box and moving it upstage]* It’s late, Sir Arthur. May I suggest a wee dram?
- ACD** *[Heading to his desk, lights dim]* A dram good idea.  
*[We’re in the study in Baker Street. It’s a winter’s night and the open fire lights the room. ACD sits at his desk while SH prepares two tumblers of whisky. It’s a time for reflection at 221B. Tempo slows and aggression fades]*
- [At desk]* Strange how you’ve remained famous whereas I’m almost forgotten.
- SH** Not forgotten, surely. *[SH gets drinks. Dialogue continues]*
- ACD** And the only thing people know about me is you.
- SH** I confess, Doyle, I’m truly impressed with your many achievements.
- ACD** Good God, Holmes, humility and admiration?
- SH** There are many who call you the father of the modern short-story.
- ACD** Many? *[SH returns with drinks when ready]*
- SH** You were once the world’s most popular author.
- ACD** Thanks to you.
- SH** And one of the world’s most famous men.
- ACD** Thanks to you.
- SH** You dined with royalty, presidents and prime ministers.
- ACD** I did. *[Remembers]* Oh and therein lies a funny story.
- SH** A joke, Sir Arthur? Do tell.
- ACD** I was enjoying a Turkish bath at Lord Burnham’s. I was stark naked except for a towel around my waist and one on my head. Suddenly, in walks the prime minister.
- SH** And there’s you without a tie.
- ACD** I had no idea of the etiquette. I stood, of course, and raised my towel.
- SH** The one on your head, I hope.  
*[Pause. ACD sees the funny side and they laugh and sip their drinks]*
- ACD** *[Back to reminiscing. Holmes lets him talk]* You know I travelled the globe and made a fortune. Reporters fought to interview me. Vast crowds invaded my meetings. When I was ill, newspapers carried daily bulletins. Generals took my advice.

- I had laws created and saved lives. I inspired troops, changed military tactics and brought comfort to millions. *[Handles/collects cricket bat]*
- SH** I knew nothing of your sporting career.
- ACD** I helped introduce cross-country ski-ing in Switzerland. I was asked to referee the world heavyweight title fight. I made a century at Lord's *and* dismissed the great W.G. Grace.
- SH** You gave generously to friends, family, even complete strangers.
- ACD** *[Doesn't wish to discuss that]* We're two of a kind, Holmes. The doctor and the detective.
- SH** How so?
- ACD** Because of you, I achieved much, maybe *all* of what I did. I'm in your debt.
- SH** But ... *[Is cut off by ACD]*
- ACD** But you wouldn't exist without me and so ...
- SH** *[Gets the point]* I'm in *your* debt. *[Pause. They raise their glasses]*
- ACD** *[Change of subject]* You were right about my historical novels.
- SH** Perhaps your literary reputation suffered because of your faith.
- ACD** There's no *perhaps* about it. But they can never accuse me of giving up.
- SH** Well, fairies and séances aside, Sir Arthur, you gave the world its most popular character.
- ACD** I knew we'd return to talking about you.
- SH** The sad thing being so few know about your other great achievements. Life jackets saving countless lives, superb accounts of history, the Court of Criminal Appeal, your advocacy of women's rights in changing divorce laws.
- ACD** I did what I believed was right.
- SH** But for me, sir, your greatest achievement was *not* the creation of Sherlock Holmes.
- ACD** *[Almost scoffing]* Oh come now, Holmes. Whatever our differences, at least we've been honest. The truth if you please.  
*[Knock on door. The Ma'am enters as Mrs. Hudson]*
- Mrs. Hudson** Excuse me, gentlemen.
- SH** Mrs. Hudson, good evening. *[She moves towards them]*
- ACD** You have interrupted something very special, Mrs. Hudson.
- Mrs. Hudson** *[Upset]* Oh Mr. Holmes, you're not going to fire that pistol in here again?
- SH** I am about to express my sincere appreciation and fond admiration for our mutual benefactor, *[Indicates ACD]* the good doctor.
- Mrs. Hudson** *[Smiles at ACD knowing he is Watson]* Good evening Doctor Watson.
- SH** *[Amused]* No, dear lady. I refer to the doctor who brought us both into the world.
- Mrs. Hudson** *[Touch peeved, genuinely confused]* Is this another of your riddles, Mr. Holmes?
- SH** Mrs. Hudson, we're discussing Doctor Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.
- Mrs. Hudson** *[Puzzled]* I've heard the name. *[Doyle nods – That'd be right]*
- SH** *[Shocked]* Heard the name?
- Mrs. Hudson** *[Can't wait all night]* There was another doctor called earlier, Mr. Holmes. *[Starting to leave]* Doctor Mortimer. And he left his walking-stick. *[Exiting]* Goodnight gentlemen. *[Exits]*
- SH** *[Genuinely sorry]* I'm sorry, Doyle. It appears I have usurped your stature.
- ACD** And stat-ues. *[They enjoy the pun]* You are, Holmes, well ahead in the popularity stakes.
- SH** But I meant what I said before, about me not being your greatest achievement.
- ACD** *[Expecting a jibe]* And the punch line is?
- SH** To me, your greatest achievement is not my universal fame but rather that I'm alive.
- ACD** *[Surprised and touched]* Alive?
- SH** You made me so real and so loved; millions believe I once existed or gladly pretend I did - still do. And I am as real and loved today as when you first created me.
- ACD** *[Touched]* Thank you, Holmes. A toast then. *[Raises his glass]* To Sherlock Holmes.

**SH**            *[Shakes head] No, sir. [Raises his glass to ACD] To the real Sherlock Holmes.  
[Doyle nods his thanks. They toast and drink as music swells and curtain falls]*

**The End**

## **Permission to perform**

*The Real Sherlock Holmes* can only be performed after first obtaining written permission from FOX PLAYS. Request a *Show Application to Perform* sheet available from the address below.

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The play has mostly been performed as a one-act play although some performances have included an interval towards the end of page 23.



# Schoolboy Sherlock Holmes

By Cenarth Fox

Author of *The Real Sherlock Holmes*

A series of contemporary mystery stories starring Nicholas Twit, a 10 year old Melbourne schoolboy who, with 13 year old Felicity Heywood-Jones, solves cases using the methods and rules employed by Mr. Holmes and Doctor Watson.

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Nick Twit's use of Holmes' techniques makes perfect sense in these tales of 21st century Australia; it all reminds me of Terrance Dicks' excellent *Baker Street Irregulars* novels, which can only be good. And there are puzzles and Sherlockian Snippets to keep the reader, of whatever age, interested.

## **The Sherlock Holmes Society of London**

Another note to let you know how impressed I am with *The Nicholas Twit Mysteries*. It's refreshing to read the Sherlockian Snippets and find the items correct and interesting. It's such a fine publication.

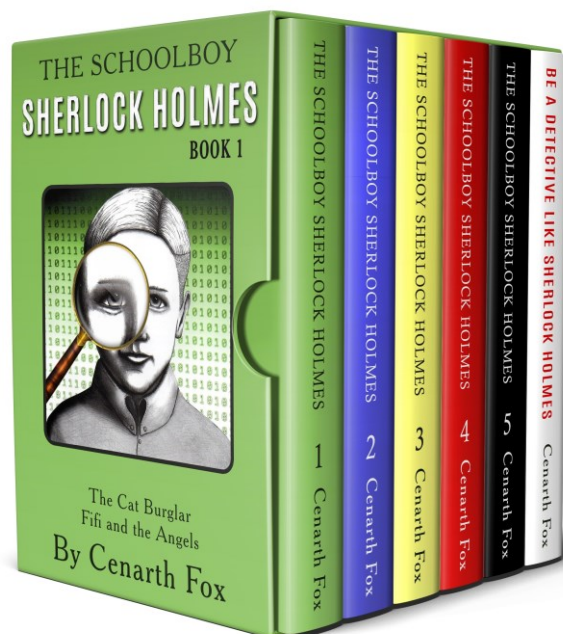
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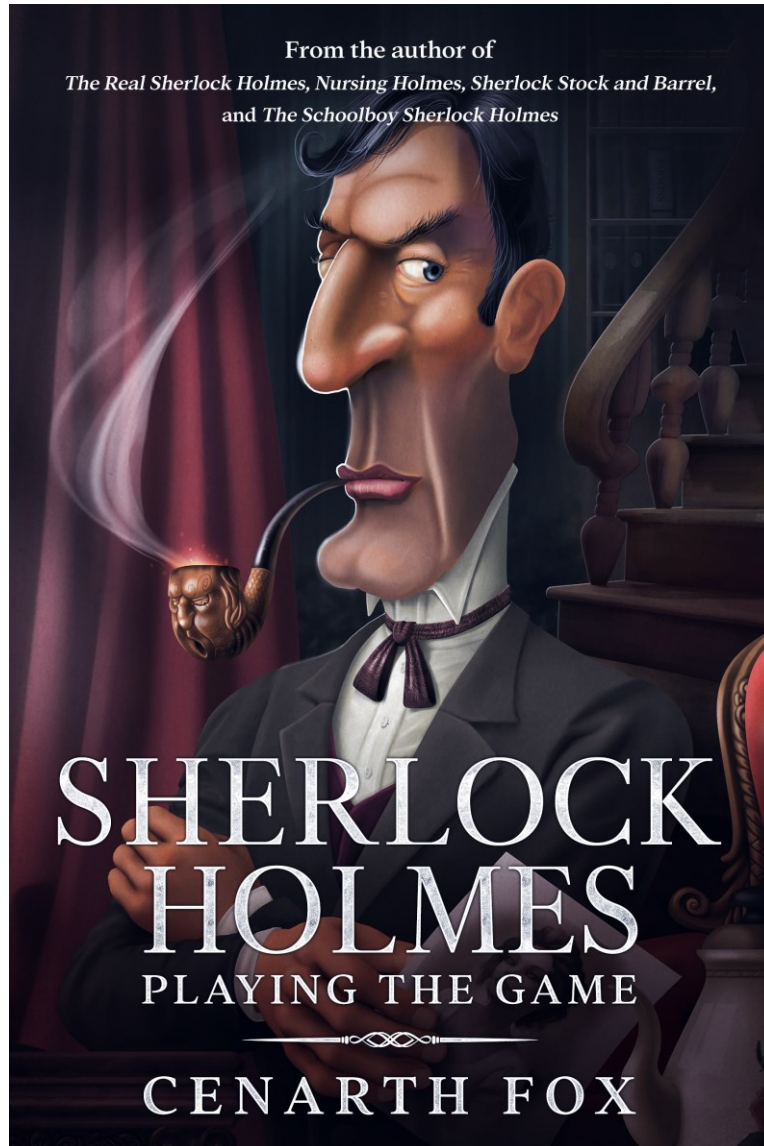
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