



Nursing Holmes

A play by Cenarth Fox

Creator of

The Real Sherlock Holmes

Sherlock, Stock and Barrel and

The Schoolboy Sherlock Holmes

THIS IS A PREVIEW SCRIPT AND MAY NOT BE COPIED OR PERFORMED IN PART OR IN WHOLE. A COMPLETE SCRIPT IS AVAILABLE FROM FOX PLAYS

Nursing Holmes stars a retiring Sherlock Holmes and Mrs Hudson, his not-so retiring landlady

A delightful show, splendidly acted and directed. Don't miss it. **Cheryl Threadgold**

Thanks for a great evening. It was wonderful. **Cameron Close**

It's a lovely idea to bring Mrs Hudson to the fore and confound Holmes. I've nothing but praise for the play.
Roger Johnson

Nursing Holmes is a period piece and Labassa, the National Trust mansion, was a wonderful setting for this, Cen Fox's third play about Sherlock Holmes. One had to pinch oneself to remember you were watching a play and it wasn't something in real life. The performance was absolutely stunning from both the actors, Kirk Alexander and Eileen Nelson. The audience just loved *Nursing Holmes* and Labassa really lent itself to the play. It was simply one of those magical afternoons and congratulations to Cen Fox for writing and directing another wonderful play. **Brian Amos**

A thoroughly professional performance, the witty and clever writing engaged the audiences. Please return and stage another production. **The National Trust**

NURSING HOLMES



© Copyright Cenarth Fox 2009

Sherlockian Trilogy

Nursing Holmes is the third in a trilogy of stage works about Arthur Conan Doyle, the detective stories he wrote [often referred to as the Canon] and the detective himself [Mr Sherlock Holmes].

Nursing Holmes is fully protected by the international laws of copyright and can only be performed after first obtaining written permission from **FOX PLAYS**. Except as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part of this book may be copied by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher.

www.foxplays.com

Production Package

Groups staging a **FOX** play or musical receive free production notes [*set-design, costumes, lighting, props, etc*] and with each large-cast musical there are free lyric sheets for chorus members plus free activity sheets related to each show's themes. Your local agent may have colour photos and video/DVD recordings of previous productions.

Introduction

Sherlock Holmes has appeared in more plays, books and films than any other fictional character. He was created by Arthur Conan Doyle who wrote sixty tales starring the world's first consulting detective.

Apart from the great detective, two characters who remain constant through most, if not all the Doylean tales, are Sherlock's friend and companion Dr John H. Watson and the landlady at Baker Street, Mrs Hudson. Actually Watson left the rooms at Baker Street at different times when he took a wife but apart from the odd European journey, Holmes remained at 221B until the sleuth retired to a small holding in Sussex. Mrs Hudson was always at home in Baker Street.

Nursing Holmes begins with the detective about to depart Baker Street for the last time. It's Christmas 1903 and the great man is sorting case files and packing his worldly possessions. There's many a famous mystery in the belongings being packed even if the filing system leaves a lot to be desired. As usual Mrs Hudson is there to respond to the demands of her famous tenant.

Holmes and Hudson are firmly in middle age. Had plastic hips been available, Mrs Hudson would certainly have been a consumer and Holmes is finding rheumatic twinges to be an uncomfortable companion.

The final night in London is quiet until Holmes receives a shock. His landlady reveals remarkable news which presents an absorbing and possible life-changing challenge for the great detective.

Characters

Sherlock Holmes – a consulting detective

Mrs Hudson – a landlady

Sherlock Holmes was tall and thin with a narrow face and exaggerated movements. He lived for many years in London. **Mrs Hudson** was a hard-working, long-suffering landlady. We assume she was a widow and may be Scottish. She is often portrayed in films as having grey hair tied in a bun. At one time she is described as follows; *Mrs. Hudson has risen to the occasion. Her cuisine is a little limited, but she has as good an idea of breakfast as a Scotchwoman.*

Accent and Appearance

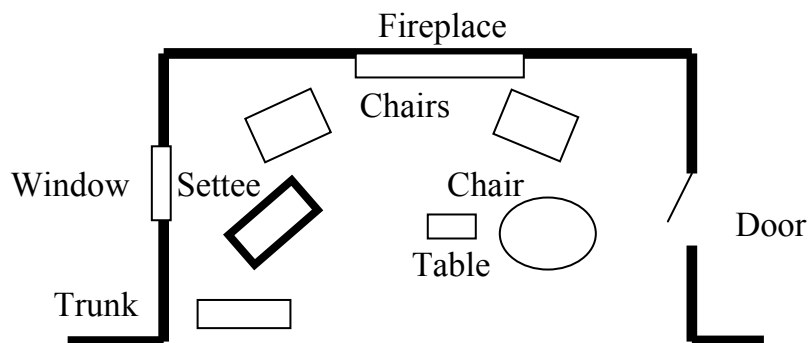
Mr Holmes has appeared on stage and screen portrayed by many actors of various shapes and sizes. He is self-confident, intelligent and widely read. Some might call him arrogant and rude. He is an educated man and speaks in a clear and precise manner. Mrs Hudson is deferential but never cowed by her illustrious tenant. Throughout the years with Holmes, she has followed orders with just a hint of irritation and complaint.

Costumes

This is a period piece [Christmas 1903] and the actors should dress accordingly. Holmes could wear black or grey trousers, brocade dressing gown or smoking jacket or simply a waist-coat, shirt, tie and trousers. He is packing after all. The play takes place indoors. Mrs Hudson needs a full-length dress probably black or grey or a black dress and a coloured blouse. She could at times wear an apron. Both actors change their costume during the interval and re-appear in their night attire.

Set Design

It is the sitting-room [parlour] used by Holmes during his time at Baker Street. A fireplace is upstage C with an arm-chair either side. A two-seater settee on an angle is RC and an overcrowded small round table used to serve meals and as a spot for setting out maps or plans is opposite. One or two dining chairs are near the small table. There could be a painting of the Reichenbach Falls over the mantelpiece above the fireplace and bookshelves on one wall. There is a window on the RC wall and there is a door to the corridor about LC. The room needs a slightly messy look as boxes and/or cases and a trunk perhaps are on view containing the books and files Holmes intends to take to Sussex.



The Script

Most, if not all, the historical events in this play actually took place. Apart from the dialogue from the Doylean stories and any references from published books, the dialogue and plot are invented.

Nursing Holmes – 4

[Pre-show music could include solo violin pieces as might have been played by the great detective. As the audience enters, the set is revealed in low light. HOLMES is already in position in the sitting-room at 221B Baker Street. A two-seater settee is about RC and the room is cluttered without being messy. A large box/trunk is DR ready for any books or papers. Empty chairs face one another upstage before the fireplace. Music fades as do the house-lights and up come the lights on the set. It is a cold December night with Christmas fast approaching]

HOLMES *[We hear but cannot see him]* Mrs Hudson! *[Louder and peeved]* Mrs Hudson!

HUDSON *[Calling from offstage]* Coming Mr Holmes

HOLMES *[Pause. Louder still]* Mrs Hudson!

HUDSON *[Sounds of movement offstage and her muttering]* I'm here, Mr Holmes.
[Door opens LC. HUDSON has difficulty opening door whilst carrying several large books. HUDSON appears. She is frail but manages]

I do wish you wouldn't shout so. *[She stops as there is no place for the books on the cluttered table]* Oh you are the worst tenant in London. Wherever shall I put your books? *[She looks for a place to place the books and realises she can't see HOLMES]* Mr Holmes?

HOLMES *[Hands appear on the top of back of settee followed by his face]* Good evening.

HUDSON *[Startled]* Mr Holmes!

HOLMES In kneeling to retrieve my magnifying lens, I have encountered difficulty in standing.

HUDSON Oh dear. Allow me to help.

HOLMES If you would be so kind. *[Disappears behind settee again]*

HUDSON *[Looking around]* But it's impossible.

HOLMES *[Pause. Appears from behind settee as before]* Is there a problem, madam?

HUDSON There is nowhere to place these books.

HOLMES *[Is that all?]* Just put them on a chair, anywhere, but kindly give me a hand.
[Disappears from view again]

HUDSON Very well.

[She delicately places books on the chair by the table. It's a difficult task and she is worried the books might slip]

HOLMES *[Head appears again]* Please don't hurry. I'm currently engaged in an experiment testing the threshold of rheumatic pain. *[Face contorts, he groans quietly then disappears]* Ow.

[HUDSON can't safely put down the books and finds herself slowly dropping to her knees still clutching the tomes. The books are now safely on the chair but she is kneeling before it. Alternatively one could slip to the floor causing her to bend]

HUDSON *[Needs some assistance]* Ah, Mr Holmes?

HOLMES I'm still here, Mrs Hudson.

HUDSON I'm afraid I can't get up.

HOLMES *[Hands then face appear over back of settee again. Miffed and groans]*

HUDSON Shall I ring for help?

HOLMES What a splendid idea. And any time this week suits me. *[Disappears]*

HUDSON *[Leans forward, reaches out but can't quite reach the bell on the table]* Mr Holmes?

Nursing Holmes – 5

- HOLMES** *[As if he's not sure]* Is that you, Mrs Hudson?
- HUDSON** I'm afraid I can't find the bell.
- HOLMES** *[Face appears with sarcasm to boot]* Never mind. It'll be Christmas soon. We'll get the goose to give us a hand.
- HUDSON** Actually I've just remembered; ringing the bell won't be much help.
- HOLMES** Why, is the goose deaf?
- HUDSON** No it's the maid's night off.
- HOLMES** *[Taking control of situation a la Basil Fawlty]* Right you are. Jolly good. Leave it to me. I'll just ... *[He pushes himself up]* Ow! *[And cries in pain as his rheumatic joints give him curry. Dusts himself down]* ... damn rheumatism.
- HUDSON** *[Impressed he's done it by himself]* Oh well done, Mr Holmes.
- HOLMES** *[Looking for a small case]* There must be something I can take to dull this pain. Where did I pack it? *[He appears to offer hand to HUDSON stand but is really reaching for a book on the table. Excited]* There it is. *[He takes book and flips through it excitedly]*
- HUDSON** Mr Holmes? *[HOLMES turns towards settee. She louder]* Mr Holmes?
- HOLMES** *[Reading]* Not now, madam, not now. *[She shrugs and with difficulty hauls herself up]*
- HUDSON** *[Getting to her feet]* Don't worry about me, sir. I'm sure I can manage. *[Dusting herself]* Now then, tea? *[Pause]* Mr Holmes?
- HOLMES** *[Looks up]* What's that?
- HUDSON** Shall I bring some tea?
- HOLMES** *[Back to reading]* Not now. *[HUDSON rearranges books etc on the table, then places the ones she carried in on the table. She tidies as she goes and talks all the while]*
- HUDSON** It seems hard to believe you've lived under my roof for more than twenty years, give or take the odd Swiss holiday. And to think this is your last night at Baker Street.
- HOLMES** *[Fascinated by the book]* Fascinating.
- HUDSON** *[Still tidying]* I've lost count of the hundreds of cases you've solved, and the many weird and wonderful visitors who've entered this room; crown heads of Europe, street urchins, even our very own Prime Minister. You are indeed famous, Mr Holmes, and rightly so. *[Admires her handiwork]* Now then, what can I do to help?
- HOLMES** *[Reading]* Not now, Mrs Hudson. I'm busy.
- HUDSON** *[Smiles then sits and watches him]* I'm going to miss your mood swings. You are untidy, unreasonable, uncontrollable and uncouth but I could never call you boring.
- HOLMES** *[Pause. Suddenly aware she's in the room]* Mrs Hudson?
- HUDSON** Good evening.
- HOLMES** *[What are you doing?]* You're sitting in my sitting-room.
- HUDSON** I thought you might like company on the eve of your retirement.

Nursing Holmes – 6

- HOLMES** [*Puts down book*] Ah, that's extremely civil of you, dear lady but I won't be gone forever. Sussex is just down the road.
- HUDSON** But to a *farm*, Mr Holmes? Somehow I can't see you as a gentleman farmer.
- HOLMES** [*Fond anticipation*] I'm five miles from Eastbourne and from my cottage on the South Downs, I have splendid views of the sea. [*Heads to fireplace*] Retirement comes to us all, madam; [*Looks at her*] even indestructible landladies.
- HUDSON** So this retirement, is it definite?
- HOLMES** [*Amused, slight chuckle*] It's no use. Watson tried to talk me round and failed miserably. The world's first and finest consulting-detective has retired.
- HUDSON** Good.
- HOLMES** I need only pack this final ... [*What did she say?*] I beg your pardon?
- HUDSON** [*She's milking the moment*] I said, "Good".
- HOLMES** I know *what* you said, madam, but am curious as to its meaning.
- HUDSON** I need to be *certain* you're leaving before I write my articles.
- HOLMES** [*Much more attentive*] Articles?
- HUDSON** Did I not tell you?
- HOLMES** Indeed you did not.
- HUDSON** *The Strand* magazine has offered to pay for my memoirs.
- HOLMES** [*He's hooked*] Your memoirs? [*Incredible*] *The Strand* magazine?
- HUDSON** Yes, I believe it's very popular.
- HOLMES** [*Miffed*] Of course it's popular – I made it popular.
- HUDSON** Oh yes. Forgive me.
- HOLMES** But what of these 'memoirs'?
- HUDSON** [*As if reading a title*] *The Landlady of Sherlock Holmes*.
- HOLMES** [*Not happy*] Oh no.
- HUDSON** The world knows of your cases but nothing of your private life.
- HOLMES** [*Starting to get angry*] My private life!
- HUDSON** [*Assuring him*] Of course I would never divulge any of your *really* unpleasant habits.
- HOLMES** [*How dare she*] Unpleasant habits!
- HUDSON** Such as repeating everything I say.
- HOLMES** [*Pause. Suddenly relaxes. Thinks she's joking*] Oh, very droll, Mrs Hudson. A comic turn before I go. [*Finger wag*] For a moment there, I thought you were serious.
- HUDSON** [*She is deadly serious*] I plan to offer tours of our Baker Street address.
- HOLMES** [*Back to being worried*] Tours!
- HUDSON** I will call them, "At home with Holmes".
- HOLMES** You cannot be serious.
- HUDSON** Visitors will enjoy a cup of tea then a viewing of this famous sitting-room.
- HOLMES** Surely you jest.

- HUDSON** [*Changes subject*] But first my memoirs. [*She takes folded letter from apron or pocket and hands it to the astonished SH*] I was quite flabbergasted at the fee.
- HOLMES** [*Back into panic/anger*] Money? [*He reads letter*]
- HUDSON** I suppose I should offer you a percentage. After all, you're ...
- HOLMES** [*Scanning letter. Surprised*] Fifty guineas!
- HUDSON** And with an increase for each new installment.
- HOLMES** [*Rising disbelief*] Installments?
- HUDSON** However, and that's why I asked if you were *definitely* leaving; under no circumstances will they accept my articles until you have retired.
- HOLMES** [*Trying to think of a way out of this*] Mrs Hudson, I strongly advise caution.
- HUDSON** [*Genuine concern*] You think I should ask for more money?
- HOLMES** [*Almost flustered*] What? No. Look, writing is an art, a profession; it requires skill and knowledge. Think of the indignity when the editor rejects your work.
- HUDSON** [*Can't accept his logic*] But they've already made me an offer.
- HOLMES** [*Hands back her letter*] Dr Watson wrote splendid reports based on first-hand experience. You cannot just *invent* things.
- HUDSON** [*Stands her ground*] But surely the basis of successful journalism is to never let the facts get in the way of a good story?
- HOLMES** [*Further thrown by her witty remark. Almost angry*] Mrs Hudson, I am bound to warn you this bizarre behaviour has the potential to cause great harm.
- HUDSON** [*Corrects him*] Not to my bank account.
- HOLMES** You are so out of character it's absurd. In the decades I've lived under your roof, I've never once known you to think.
- HUDSON** You've never once *asked* me to think.
- HOLMES** As landlady and receptionist, you have admirable qualities.
- HUDSON** [*Nod of appreciation*] Thank you sir.
- HOLMES** And being a woman, you are ideally qualified for domestic duties.
- HUDSON** [*Almost teasing him*] How kind you are.
- HOLMES** But you've never shown a spark of intelligence and have performed only the most menial of tasks. In my glittering career, madam, you are the walking wallpaper.
- HUDSON** [*Back to serious*] That's as may be, Mr Holmes but the question remains. [*Emphatic*] Are you off in the morning?
- HOLMES** [*Angry*] You cannot make bricks without clay and your feeble fading memory is simply not enough.
- HUDSON** I agree.
- HOLMES** The idea is preposterous. [*Changes gear*] You agree?
- HUDSON** My memory *is* feeble and that's why I've kept a scrapbook. [*She goes to fetch it upstage*]
- HOLMES** [*Stunned*] A what?
- HUDSON** You inspired me with all *your* scrapbooks.
- HOLMES** [*Groaning*] Oh no.

Nursing Holmes – 8

- HUDSON** Newspaper articles, photographs, letters, calling cards; everything.
[Offers tatty scrapbook to SH] I'd be honoured if you'd read it.
- HOLMES** *[Pause. In shock]* Thank you but I must finish packing.
- HUDSON** So many memories.
- HOLMES** *[Adamant]* Madam, I have not the slightest interest in your scrapbook.
- FX** *Doorbell sounds/ Knock on door*
- HUDSON** Now who can that be at this time of night?
[She puts scrapbook on table and heads to door]
- HOLMES** Whoever it is, send them away. *[Calling as she exits]* Sherlock Holmes has retired.
[She exits and HOLMES waits. He moves quickly for a man with rheumatism and opens the door a little to see if she has gone downstairs. Satisfied she has, he closes the door, moves to the table and flicks through her scrapbook reading aloud. He is shocked and argumentative]
That's not me – is it? ... The case of the what? ... I would *never* wear that ... Not guilty? ... Drugs? ... A secret lover? ... *[Tilts head]* What is *that*?
[He hears footsteps, hurriedly closes book and moves from table. HUDSON enters with envelope]
- HUDSON** *[Indicating envelope]* Special delivery, Mr Holmes; from the good doctor.
- HOLMES** *[Waves her aside]* I'll read it later.
- HUDSON** *[Heads upstage and places letter]* It'll be a letter wishing you well in your retirement.
- HOLMES** *[Packing]* Right now I have more pressing matters.
- HUDSON** *[Starts to collect scrapbook]* Of course. I'll leave you to your packing.
- HOLMES** *[Pause. Uncertain]* Ah, Mrs. Hudson?
- HUDSON** Mr Holmes?
- HOLMES** Perhaps I might give your article the once over.
- HUDSON** *[Thrilled]* Oh would you?
- HOLMES** Just to check your spelling and syntax.
- HUDSON** *[With scrapbook, taking over]* Thank you, Mr Holmes, that's very kind. Now I've made a start on your family tree.
- HOLMES** Mrs Hudson, I meant later.
- HUDSON** *[Ignores his protest going straight on]* Something's not quite right.
[HOLMES is no longer the dominant person. HUDSON has taken control]
- HOLMES** *[Mild protest]* Madam, it's very late.
- HUDSON** *[Looking through pages to find the right spot]* Here we are. *[Sees him standing]*
Oh please, do sit. *[Almost excited]* You're going to enjoy this.
- HOLMES** *[Sits on settee and remarkably is a touch servile]* How bizarre.
- HUDSON** *[Interviews him]* Now, Mr Holmes, are you pedantic?
- HOLMES** You know it is a hobby of mine to have an exact knowledge of London.
- HUDSON** Excellent and that is why I propose to correct the many mistakes made by you and Dr Watson.
- HOLMES** *[Shocked]* Mistakes?

- HUDSON** You're both to blame but rest assured, I will put things right.
- HOLMES** *[A vain protest]* Madam.
- HUDSON** My articles will tell future generations the truth about Sherlock Holmes.
- HOLMES** *[Thrown by the woman behaving as such]* The truth?
- HUDSON** Let's begin with the confusion surrounding your grandmother being a sister of the French painter Vernet.
- HOLMES** Confusion?
- HUDSON** And *[Shaking head or wagging finger]* this from a self-confessed pedant.
- HOLMES** *[Mildly offended]* I am related to Vernet.
- HUDSON** But which one? There are several French painters called Vernet?
- HOLMES** *[He didn't. Struggling]* Well yes, I think you may be correct.
- HUDSON** *Think, Mr Holmes?* Either you know or you don't.
- HOLMES** *[Annoyed]* Look, what is your point?
- HUDSON** There are four well-known French painters called Vernet. To whom are you related?
- HOLMES** *[Concedes]* Oh I see, of course.
- HUDSON** Your claim is akin to my saying my great-uncle was an Irishman named Murphy.
- HOLMES** *[Testy]* Yes, yes, you've made your point.
- HUDSON** Or my grandfather was a Mr Williams from Wales.
- HOLMES** *[Snaps]* All right. My great-uncle was Emile Jean Horace Vernet born in 1789. *[Through gritted teeth]* Is that precise enough for you?
- HUDSON** *[Writing]* Seventeen ... eighty-nine.
- HOLMES** He painted gentlemen engaged in boxing and fencing, which, coincidentally were *my* athletic pursuits when young. Now, is that all?
- HUDSON** Is that all? Mr Holmes, you and Dr Watson have bequeathed enough blunders to keep me busy for the rest of my life.
- HOLMES** *[Under his breath]* Which may not be much longer.
- HUDSON** *[Didn't hear]* I'm sorry?
- HOLMES** *[Takes a stand]* Enough, madam. This nitpicking of minutiae is invasive and of no interest.
- HUDSON** Au contraire, Monsieur. Twas you who said, "There is nothing so important as trifles".
- HOLMES** *[Temper rising]* The trifles of *others*.
- HUDSON** But forget minutiae, Mr Holmes, let us consider elementary errors.
- HOLMES** Elementary, Mrs Hudson?
- HUDSON** In your very first case, *The Study in Scarlet*
- HOLMES** Oh please. It's not The Study but A Study in Scarlet.
- HUDSON** *[Picks up on his correction]* See, you are pedantic.
- HOLMES** And this so-called error?

- HUDSON** *[Returns to tale]* Dr Watson wrote that when fighting in Afghanistan he was struck by a Jezail bullet receiving a wound to his *[Touching her shoulder]* shoulder.
[A Jezail or Jezzail was an Afghan musket]
- HOLMES** Watson was correct.
- HUDSON** But a short time later he referred to the very same wound being in his *leg*. Now that, sir, is a blunder. It is not a slip of the pen but a serious anatomical anomaly – *and* from, of all people, a medical man.
- HOLMES** *[Smug]* Well if that's your best *shot*, *[Pun]*, your writing career is over.
- HUDSON** *[Shocked]* I don't understand.
- HOLMES** *[Moves so as to turn side on to the audience]* Watson was wounded and took cover like so, *[HOLMES in a little pain bends almost double]* the bullet struck him here, *[indicates his shoulder]* passed through and entered his leg *[indicates]* thus causing two wounds from the same shot.
- HUDSON** *[Shocked]* Good heavens.
- HOLMES** *[Still bent over]* In the colder months his leg gives him merry hell *[Winces from rheumatic pain]* whereas in summer it's his shoulder. *[Winces again]*
- HUDSON** *[Genuinely grateful. Writing/crossing out in her scrapbook]* Bullet ... struck ... shoulder.
- HOLMES** *[Pause. He is frozen and cannot straighten himself]* Mrs Hudson?
- HUDSON** *[Writing]* ... then ... entered ... leg.
- HOLMES** *[Louder]* Mrs Hudson?
- HUDSON** *[Stops writing]* Mr Holmes?
- HOLMES** *[In pain]* I cannot straighten myself.
- HUDSON** *[Stands, concerned]* Oh dear. Is it your rheumatism?
- HOLMES** No, I always take this pose of an evening.
- HUDSON** Perhaps I could be of assistance?
- HOLMES** Well as it's the maid's night off and the goose won't be here 'til Christmas, perhaps you could.
- HUDSON** *[Goes to him]* Very well, I'll do my best. *[Wonders how to handle him]* Ah, where shall I place my hands?
- HOLMES** *[Impatient, in pain]* Oh for pity's sake, woman - anywhere.
- HUDSON** *[Won't be bullied]* Mr Holmes, I would prefer *somewhere*.
- HOLMES** *[Irritated]* Well *somewhere* then. Just unbend me.
[HUDSON stands facing HOLMES, places her hands on the underneath of his shoulders and, taking her time, suddenly heaves upwards. In pain HOLMES straightens with a cry of agony]
- HUDSON** *[She assists him to settee]* I think Dr Watson was right when he said, "You need nursing, Holmes". *[He sits]*
[She returns to her scrapbook]
- HOLMES** *[Under his breath]* I need to retire.
- HUDSON** *[Back into her routine]* Now it's not just your *mistakes*, sir. I want to tell the world about life here in Baker Street.
- HOLMES** How tedious.

- HUDSON** I'm sure people will be fascinated to learn you were so untidy.
- HOLMES** *[Sarcastic]* You are too kind.
- HUDSON** *[Pointed]* And sarcastic. *[Heading UC, referring to scrapbook and reminding herself of his habits]* You kept cigars in the coal scuttle, tobacco in a Persian slipper and unanswered letters skewered to the mantle-piece with a dagger.
- HOLMES** *[What's wrong with that?]* Everything in its place.
- HUDSON** *[Moving and picking up page of The Times]* You discarded newspapers anywhere and look, your notes and books are *[Indicates table]* piled higgledy-piggledy around the room. If a herd of buffaloes had passed by, there could not be a greater mess.
- HOLMES** So you'll be glad to see me go.
- HUDSON** I'll certainly not miss your smells.
- HOLMES** Charming.
- HUDSON** Your shag tobacco is revolting and those chemical experiments ...
[Waves in front of her face] ergh.
- HOLMES** Is that all? Any other flaws or frailties?
- HUDSON** *[Picks up scrapbook]* Only that you have been untruthful, a fraud and just plain dumb.
[Wow! HOLMES was not expecting that. Pause. It's not so much that HUDSON is suddenly a thinking, seemingly intelligent, three-dimensional character or that she is castigating the world's greatest detective but rather that she is doing so in such a calm and direct manner]
- HOLMES** *[Recovering]* I see. But overall, would you say I'm a rather nice fellow?
- HUDSON** It grieves me to reveal your faults, Mr Holmes but if I am to replace Dr Watson as your chronicler, truth will out.
- HOLMES** *[Under his breath]* 'Women are never to be entirely trusted'.
- HUDSON** Let us consider truth. You claim to be the author of a monograph on the polyphonic motets of Lassus.
[Orlande de Lassus was a Franco-Flemish composer of late Renaissance music]
- HOLMES** I *am* that creator.
- HUDSON** Well I have searched the libraries and museums of London and not only could I not *find* said document, no-one has even *heard* of it.
- HOLMES** You would call me a liar?
- HUDSON** Perhaps senile.
- HOLMES** *[To table]* Madam, I am neither demented nor dishonest. *[Furious and starts searching]* And I shall find that essay to disprove your slanderous claim.
- HUDSON** We don't have the time, Mr Holmes.
- HOLMES** *[Searching in vain]* I believe it's over [in] here.
- HUDSON** But with your chaotic clutter, by the time you find the manuscript, I'll be dead.
- HOLMES** *[Under breath]* Hope springs eternal. *[More industrious searching. Desperate]*
[He has no method and his searching is in vain. HUDSON simply moves on]
- HUDSON** *[Ignores his searching]* Moving to your fraudulent claims.
- HOLMES** *[Stops searching. Puffing a little]* I shall find it later. *[Shocked]* My what?

- HUDSON** Cigar-ash.
- HOLMES** Ah, yes; my thoughts on the ash of one hundred and forty varieties of tobacco. [*Sarcastic*] Have you found *that* monograph?
- HUDSON** It is not the *existence* of your penmanship, Mr Holmes. It is the truth of your claim.
- HOLMES** Be careful, madam. I am neither doddery nor deceitful.
- HUDSON** Then perhaps just wrong.
- HOLMES** [*Indignant*] *Wrong?* How so?
- HUDSON** Some scientists claim we cannot distinguish one tobacco ash from another.
- HOLMES** [*Shocked*] We can't?
- HUDSON** Aroma yes, but ash varies according to the rate at which tobacco is smoked.
- HOLMES** And are you sure of these facts?
- HUDSON** I have a good master, Mr Holmes; [*Gentle finger wag*] I never guess. [*HOLMES stunned to have his own words spoken back to him. HUDSON moves on smoothly*] And now to our third topic.
- HOLMES** [*Knows what is coming*] You mean the *coup de grace* where the senile liar is branded a nincompoop.
- HUDSON** I fear there is no other explanation. I've studied all the evidence, removed the impossible and what remains points clearly to you being thick.
- HOLMES** [*Let's it sink in*] What an extraordinary final-night.
- HUDSON** In *The Adventure of Black Peter* you spent *three days* sending telegrams to Scotland.
- HOLMES** [*Defensive*] Seeking information about ships and their masters.
- HUDSON** Indeed.
- HOLMES** And such information enabled me to solve the case.
- HUDSON** But why send telegrams when there was a telephone across the road?
- HOLMES** [*Shocked*] A what?
- HUDSON** You could have wrapped up the case in minutes.
- HOLMES** [*Thrown*] A telephone across the road?
- HUDSON** Dr Watson referred to it in another case.
- HOLMES** [*Straw-grasping*] Ah yes, but Watson's reports are not to be wholly trusted.
- HUDSON** So you take credit for the triumphs and blame Watson for the flops?
- HOLMES** I merely suggest that *sometimes* Watson got it wrong.
- HUDSON** [*HOLMES relieved but not for long. HUDSON refers to her scrapbook*] Now which of the following is the odd one out? – snake, jellyfish, butterfly, orchid.
- HOLMES** Clearly the latter - the orchid's a plant.
- HUDSON** You are both correct and *incorrect*.
- HOLMES** Riddles, Mrs Hudson?
- HUDSON** There *is* no odd one out because each of the four items is a Watsonian gaffe of which I regret to say, your colleague made many.
- HOLMES** [*Aside*] Leaving here not being one of them.
- HUDSON** I refer to the snake in *The Speckled Band*, the jellyfish in *The Lion's Mane* and the butterfly and orchid in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

- HOLMES** Which brings us to your ‘clever-clogs’ explanation.
- HUDSON** It’s highly unlikely a swamp-adder would respond to a whistle, drink milk or kill a human in a trice.
- HOLMES** [*Sarcastic HOLMES*] Perhaps we could fetch the snake and try.
- HUDSON** [*Ignores the taunts*] Then Dr Watson reports on a death by jellyfish sting.
- HOLMES** Quite painful I’m told.
- HUDSON** But a jellyfish floats in the sea making it almost impossible to be stood upon.
- HOLMES** And a swimmer too are we?
- HUDSON** [*Continues ignoring HOLMES*] The *Chequered Skipper* butterfly has never been seen in Devonshire and the orchid flowers in mid-summer, yet Dr Watson places both on Dartmoor in late September.
- HOLMES** [*A counter-attack full of sarcasm and anger*] So, Mrs Hudson, were you there?
- HUDSON** You know I wasn’t.
- HOLMES** Did you skirt the treacherous mires and oozing black bogs?
- HUDSON** I think you’re being silly.
- HOLMES** Were you living rough upon the moor and amidst the swirling mists, did you confront the howling beast and the murderous madman?
- HUDSON** No, Mr Holmes.
- HOLMES** No madam, you were tucked up nice and warm here in dear old Baker Street with chair, coals and cocoa.
- HUDSON** Actually I was extremely busy.
- HOLMES** [*Scoffing*] Oh I’ll bet you were. Scoffing scones and spreading gossip.
- HUDSON** [*Indicates*] As it happens I was refining my scrapbook.
[*That shuts him up*]
- HOLMES** [*Is the great man finally stumped. Pathetic retort*] Ah yes, but can anyone confirm that?
- HUDSON** [*Ignores that remark and goes for the jugular*] But my most distressing discovery concerns your slapdash approach to detail.
- HOLMES** [*Offended*] Slapdash?
- HUDSON** Or was it pure laziness?
- HOLMES** I’ve been called many things, madam, but never ‘slapdash’.
- HUDSON** You often refer to *Bradshaw’s Railway Companion*.
- HOLMES** [*Collects Bradshaw from trunk*] It is my bible.
- HUDSON** So why then in 1889 did you ask Dr Watson to meet you at Paddington station to catch the 11.15 train?
- HOLMES** Because it was a perfectly logical request, the very antithesis of slapdash.
- HUDSON** But in 1889 *Bradshaw* tells us there *was* no train at 11.15.
- HOLMES** [*Momentarily speechless*] There wasn’t?
- HUDSON** A famous detective once said, [*Mimics HOLMES*] “You must really pay attention to these details”.
- HOLMES** [*Sudden mood change. Whispers*] Stop! Do not move a muscle. [*Moves to door*]
- HUDSON** [*She is worried. Whispers*] Mr Holmes?
- HOLMES** [*Whispers*] Not a sound. [*He listens at the door*] Is the front door locked?

HUDSON *[Whispers]* Definitely.

HOLMES *[Whispers]* We have a visitor.

HUDSON *[Whispers]* Are you sure?

HOLMES *[Whispers]* I never guess.

HUDSON *[Whispers]* Who could it be?

HOLMES *[Tip toes across room]* You're the new Watson. Look in your scrapbook.

HUDSON *[Genuinely flustered]* But if it's a new case, I won't have any notes.

HOLMES *[Takes hidden gun from portmanteau DR]* I shall need my trusty Webley.

HUDSON *[Gasps, stifled scream]* Your revolver!

HOLMES Excellent observation, Watson. Now kindly take cover.
[HUDSON goes and stands behind settee]

HUDSON Could it be one of Professor Moriarty's men?

HOLMES *[Checking revolver]* I shall extinguish the lights. You must hide.

HUDSON Yes sir. *[She ducks out of sight, pause then pokes head over back of settee]* Mr Holmes?

HOLMES What now?

HUDSON Did Dr Watson take notes during the heat of battle?

HOLMES *[Fiddling with gun. Annoyed at HUDSON]* What? Yes, I think so.

HUDSON Well I can't. I haven't got my scrapbook.

HOLMES *[Furious whisper]* Will you please hide?
[HUDSON hides behind settee and HOLMES tip-toes towards door. He reaches for light. BLACKOUT. Pause]

HOLMES *[Whisper]* Hush. *[Pause. Dramatic]* I sense the presence of evil.

HUDSON *[Whisper]* Mr Holmes?

HOLMES *[Hisses]* Madam, we are not play acting; this is a *real* case.

HUDSON *[Whispers]* I know. I can't believe I'm actually *in* one of your mysteries.

HOLMES *[Screams]* You fiend, you diabolical monster. Take that!

FX *Gun shot*

HUDSON *[Screams in terror as if dying]*
[Silence. Pause]

HOLMES *[Relaxed, heading to light switch]* Relax, Mrs Hudson. It's all over. *[Lights return. HOLMES places gun in trunk. He speaks to the unseen HUDSON]* Mrs Hudson? *[Pause. Matter of fact]* Mrs Hudson, I'm certain I told you to duck.

HUDSON *[Pause. From behind settee. Eerie]* It's still here.

HOLMES Come now dear lady, the danger has passed.
[Slowly HUDSON'S head appears from behind settee. But it is not her head we see first but what is on her head. It is a creature just shot by dead-eye-dick HOLMES]

HUDSON *[In fear and trembling. More emphatic]* It's still here.

HOLMES *[Calm. Crosses to her]* Nothing to worry about; I am an excellent shot. *[Takes huge rat from her head and examines it]* But will this tale ever be told?

HUDSON *[Shocked, her head appears]* I thought I was dead. I saw this wild creature spring towards me.

HOLMES *[Calm]* And then I shot it *[Indicates on rat]* here, between the eyes.

HUDSON *[Still in shock, struggles to stand]* But what if you had missed?

- HOLMES** [*Scoffs*] Missed? I am a martial art expert, superb violinist, renowned pugilist and skilful swordsman. Sherlock Holmes does not miss.
- HUDSON** [*Regaining her composure*] With respect, sir, you're getting on a bit, have rising rheumatism and you fired in the dark.
- HOLMES** Ah yes but I aimed for the glint of the eyes.
- HUDSON** Mine or its?
- HOLMES** Do you not recall I once fired one hundred bullets into [*Pointing*] that very wall?
- HUDSON** How could I ever forget?
- HOLMES** To salute our gracious Queen Victoria, I created the letters V R in bullet-holes.
- HUDSON** [*Slowly recovering*] I'm going to miss your hobbies, Mr Holmes.
- HOLMES** Rest assured, madam, you were never in any danger.
- HUDSON** [*Looking at rat*] But what is it you have just shot?
- HOLMES** This is the species *Sundamys infraluteus*; the giant rat of Sumatra.
- HUDSON** [*Moves closer to examine the creature. Distressed*] It's repulsive.
- HOLMES** [*HOLMES takes rat out*] A story for which the world is not yet prepared.
- HUDSON** [*Excited, seeking scrapbook*] A new story? There is an unreported case?
- HOLMES** [*Returns*] Madam, I've solved hundreds of cases. Watson recorded a mere handful.
- HUDSON** [*Excited with pen poised*] Oh Mr Holmes, I would love to write about your unrecorded cases.
- HOLMES** [*Mock correction*] But you're far too busy.
- HUDSON** Busy?
- HOLMES** [*Mimics HUDSON*] "Mr Holmes, you and Dr Watson have bequeathed enough blunders to keep me busy for the rest of my life."
- HUDSON** Touché, sir, but I beg you to tell more of the unknown.
- HOLMES** [*Thinking about it*] Well, you have met the giant rat.
- HUDSON** [*Scribbling*] This is wonderful.
- HOLMES** There was the disappearance of a Mr James Phillimore.
- HUDSON** [*Writing*] Phill-i-more.
- HOLMES** Who stepped back into his house and was never more seen in this world.
- HUDSON** [*Scribbling furiously*] ... never ... seen.
- HOLMES** Then His Holiness had me investigate the sudden death of Cardinal Tosca.
- HUDSON** [*Impressed*] The Pope!
- HOLMES** [*Intimate voice*] And great secrecy surrounded my investigation of the politician, the lighthouse and the trained cormorant.
- HUDSON** [*Writing*] ... trained ... cormorant.
- HOLMES** [*Still lowering his voice*] Beware East End bullies should you breathe a word about Wilson, the notorious canary-handler.
- HUDSON** [*Scribbling*] ... canary-handler. [*At HOLMES*] But why were these cases not recorded?

- HOLMES** [*Goes about his packing*] Oh various reasons. Watson got married; government secrecy or once when I worked for Her Majesty.
- HUDSON** [*Hugely impressed*] You worked for Queen Victoria?
- HOLMES** I solved a case involving security of the Crown.
- HUDSON** [*Wants more information*] And?
- HOLMES** [*Matter of fact*] I was thanked in person by our longest-serving Monarch.
- HUDSON** [*Stunned*] You met the Queen? In person?
- HOLMES** She gave me a token of the occasion.
- HUDSON** But the world must hear of this.
- HOLMES** [*Still packing*] I even politely declined a knighthood.
- HUDSON** [*Shocked*] You what?
- HOLMES** I have never sought fame.
- HOLMES** But had I known, I would have *demand*ed you accept.
- HOLMES** [*Addresses her*] Madam, I have no desire for personal glory.
- HUDSON** But *I* do! [*HOLMES shocked*] Oh it's all right for you, you're famous. I'm Missus Nobody. No-one stops me in the street. No-one points at me and says, "There's the landlady of the famous Sherlock Holmes."
- HOLMES** [*Doesn't understand*] What on Earth are you talking about?
- HUDSON** Had you accepted that knighthood, people would speak in reverential tones, [*Almost gushing*] "Look, there is the residence of Sir Sherlock Holmes".
- HOLMES** Madam, I believe you are a snob.
- HUDSON** Oh you have no idea of the taunts I've endured.
- HOLMES** Taunts?
- HUDSON** My friend at 27A Wimpole Street keeps house for a professor of linguistics.
- HOLMES** [*Returns to packing, not interested*] Fascinating.
- HUDSON** She boasts of his magnificent home, exclusive neighbourhood, his mother's enormous wealth and superior friends.
- HOLMES** Might I suggest you tell someone who cares?
- HUDSON** If you were a sir, Mr Holmes. I'd put her right back in her box. [*Mimics bragging to Mrs Pearce*] "Well *I'm* the landlady of Sir Sherlock Holmes."
- HOLMES** [*Shaking head at her behaviour*] Do I know this professor?
- HUDSON** You should, he's peculiar like you. He teaches people how to speak properly by using nonsensical words.
- HOLMES** Nonsensical?
- HUDSON** Yes, like this. [*Spoken by an unknown student because Eliza Doolittle first appeared in 1913*] Gah gah gah gah gah gah gah gah gah gah.
[*Which is "The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain" spoken with marbles in mouth*]
- HOLMES** That's not nonsensical, that's English.
- HUDSON** [*Stunned*] English?
- HOLMES** Yes. Spoken with a mouth full of marbles.
- HUDSON** [*Greatly impressed*] Oh Mr Holmes, you are *brilliant*.
- HOLMES** Six marbles to be exact.

HUDSON Wait till I tell that Wimpole Street social-climber.

HOLMES *[Exiting]* If you must but for now, please excuse me.

HUDSON *[Minor panic]* Mr Holmes, wait!

HOLMES *[At door]* I have personal effects to pack. *[Exits]*

HUDSON *[Calling]* No! Sir! *[Sad. To an empty room]* I haven't finished the interview. *[Pause. Thinking]* Oh if only you'd been knighted.

[HUDSON enacts a fantasy pretending that HOLMES did accept the knighthood. Indicating tea. She is toffy]

Tea is served, Sir Sherlock. *[Acts out coming into room]* Excuse me, Doctor Watson, there's a gentlemen to see ... Sir Sherlock. *[Groveling bow]* Will that be all, Sir Sherlock? *[Dreaming, sighs]* Ah, the Queen.

[God Save the Queen plays softly underneath the fantasy which grows ever more complex. HUDSON instantly becomes Queen Victoria on the day of the investiture. She could slip on a mock head piece worn by the royal person. As Queen Victoria. Claps hand and calls]

Underlings! Minions! *[Invisible staff member enters]* I am your Queen and Mr Sherlock Holmes is soon to be knighted. Where is my sword? *[Louder]* My sword!

[Suddenly the Queen becomes a servant and dashes upstage]

[As servant obsequious and bending low] I'll find it, Y'Majesty. I'll find it. I fink it's over 'ere.

[Grabs a poker from beside the fireplace and runs back downstage to humbly hand poker to Queen. As servant. The poker could be mimed]

'ere's your poker, I mean sword, y'Majesty?

[Accepts it from herself. She rehearses dubbing and is back to being the Queen]

Ah, my sword. I shall dub thee, knight. Kneel, Mr Holmes. *[Suddenly aghast, pointing at bare floor]* Footstool! Where is the footstool upon which the great man's knee shall rest?

[Queen back as servant dashes around searching for footstool] I'll find it, y'Majesty. I'll find it. I fink it's over 'ere.

[Finds chamber pot in SHERLOCK'S possessions] 'ere's your chamber-pot, I mean footstool, y'Majesty?

[Servant rushes to Queen who accepts chamber pot from herself. As Queen examining chamber pot]

We are not amused. *[Places chamber pot on floor, raises poker/sword, dubs an imaginary HOLMES and addresses him]* Arise, Sir Sherlock.

[She raises poker having knighted the man. Suddenly door opens and HOLMES appears. HUDSON as herself gives an almighty scream. HOLMES is wearing a primitive bee-keeper's head-piece with gauze cloth and is carrying a primitive metal container which gives out puffs of smoke. He is simply trying on his outfit as Sussex's soon to be famous apiarist. An alternative costume could be a pith helmet and a large cloth a la mask tied around his head]

- HOLMES** *[Firing puff of smoke]* Hello honey.
- HUDSON** *[Momentarily believing HOLMES to be an evil criminal come to harm her beloved tenant, HUDSON screams/brandishes poker]* Get out! Get out I say!
- HOLMES** *[Removing the disguise]* Mrs. Hudson, it is I.
- HUDSON** *[Recovering]* Oh Mr Holmes! You and your silly disguises.
[HOLMES moves into room]
- HOLMES** I am rehearsing for my bee-keeping. *[Sees pot]* That's my chamber pot!
- HUDSON** *[Taking pot, his disguise etc and placing them somewhere safe]* You gave me quite a start there, Mr Holmes.
[HOLMES indicates and perhaps assists her to sit]
- HOLMES** Then please accept my most sincere apology. Please be assured there are no bees in Baker Street.
- HUDSON** *[Sitting]* Well with you, Mr Holmes, nothing would surprise.
- HOLMES** *[Sitting as well]* Just think, tomorrow I become an apiarist in Sussex.
- HUDSON** *[Sad]* So you won't be going to Buckingham Palace?
- HOLMES** The palace? Whatever for?
- HUDSON** Nothing. I was just dreaming.
- HOLMES** Come now dear lady. All this activity cannot be good for either of us. Make yourself comfortable. *[Indicates]* Take Watson's chair.
[They are in a reflective mood. They relax. The lights could dim. The mood is quiet and relaxed after all the action beforehand. Could they move upstage to the chairs either side of the fireplace? The speeches are slower and softer. Perhaps a short violin solo]
- HUDSON** *[Sitting]* Thank you, sir.
- HOLMES** So Mrs Hudson, it has come to this.
- HUDSON** It has, Mr Holmes, after all these years.
- HOLMES** I am retired but what about you?
- HUDSON** Well tomorrow I am officially a lonely old woman.
- HOLMES** Nonsense. You'll find another tenant; someone neat and polite who shuns guns, tobacco and drugs.
- HUDSON** No more tenants, Mr Holmes. After you, they broke the Napoleonic mold.
- HOLMES** *[Nods in appreciation]* Vous etes spirituel. *[You are witty]*
- HUDSON** You sir, are unique.
- HOLMES** And I must say tonight has been a revelation. I had no idea that...
- HUDSON** *[Answers for him]* That I had half a brain?
- HOLMES** Oh please. You judge me harshly.
- HUDSON** But surely you know women have been denied a voice since Darwin's primeval creatures first made cups of tea. We are the invisible sex and even those with status and beauty are required primarily for rudimentary functions. *[Pause]* So what may one deduce from your silence?
- HOLMES** I was thinking that for the last two decades I've been bouncing ideas off the wrong Baker Street resident.
- HUDSON** *[Mild rebuke, stands]* Now that I won't stand for, sir, and I should have said this years ago. You were unfairly critical of Dr Watson.
- HOLMES** I spoke the truth.

- HUDSON** You constantly sought his advice knowing it might be wrong and then belittled him when it was.
- HOLMES** Belittled is unfair. But I am direct and say what I know to be true.
- HUDSON** You are certainly direct.
- HOLMES** And regardless of my critical comments, no living person was ever dearer or more true a friend than Dr. John H. Watson.
- HUDSON** I know. He told me of the case in which he was shot.
- HOLMES** *[Remembering]* Ah, *The Adventure of the Three Garridebs*.
- HUDSON** Did you really threaten the man who shot the good doctor?
- HOLMES** I did. I clearly recall my words. *[Remembers and speaks as he did then. Passionate]* “By the Lord, if you had killed Watson, you would not have got out of this room alive.”
- HUDSON** *[Pause]* You loved him.
- HOLMES** *[Nods almost silent]* And still do.
- HUDSON** *[Pointing]* Don’t forget his letter.
- HOLMES** *[Snaps out of emotional mood. HOLMES is rarely emotional. He is a machine]* So then, Mrs Hudson, we were discussing your future.
- HUDSON** *[Hops up to fetch her scrapbook]* I will be busy with my scrapbook and writing.
- HOLMES** *[Upset]* Oh no. You can’t be serious.
- HUDSON** I shall reveal the *correct* version of your brilliant achievements.
- HOLMES** But Watson has produced an admirable account.
- HUDSON** *[Looking through scrapbook]* There are the cases he failed to record.
- HOLMES** Of which there are hundreds.
- HUDSON** And the claims you took drugs.
- HOLMES** *[Not that hoary old chestnut]* Not that!
- HUDSON** Your attitude to sex.
- HOLMES** *[Groan of displeasure]*
- HUDSON** And of course, not forgetting your horoscope.
- HOLMES** *[You can’t be serious]* My what?
- HUDSON** Your birthday draws nigh and January six makes you a Capricorn.
- HOLMES** Don’t tell me; you attend séances and believe in fairies.
- HUDSON** Please answer my questions truthfully.
- HOLMES** You have forgotten my words; ‘No ghosts need apply’.
- HUDSON** Do you perform domestic duties?
- HOLMES** Rarely.
- HUDSON** *[Mild rebuke]* Truthfully.
- HOLMES** *[Annoyed]* Oh all right, never.
[Each answer causes HUDSON to make a tick in her book before she asks the next question]
- HUDSON** Capricorn. Do you enjoy being waited on, having others at your beck and call.
- HOLMES** Constantly.
- HUDSON** Are you cold and offhand?

- HOLMES** Definitely.
- HUDSON** Do you often sleep for long periods even days at a time?
- HOLMES** I do.
- HUDSON** Are you rude and offhand to subordinates?
- HOLMES** I am rude and offhand full stop. *[period]*
- HUDSON** Are you devoted to duty?
- HOLMES** Always.
- HUDSON** Do you think with your head and not with your heart?
- HOLMES** You know I do.
- HUDSON** *[Final tick]* All of which makes you the quintessential Capricorn.
- HOLMES** Madam, I solve cases with science – footprints, handwriting, cigar ash, even the depth to which parsley sinks into butter. But this astrology nonsense is all smoke and mirrors.
- HUDSON** Yet it tells us much about the characteristics and personal habits of one Sherlock Holmes.
- HOLMES** If you want human nature, read the agony columns in our daily newspapers.
- HUDSON** Tell me then, do you enjoy climbing?
- HOLMES** What? Look, you know I've scaled the odd Swiss mountain.
- HUDSON** *[The clincher]* The Capricorn sign is a goat, a skilled and daring climber.
- HOLMES** So I happen to vaguely match a few characteristics.
- HUDSON** You happen to *exactly* match *all* characteristics.
- HOLMES** All right, if you insist on this fortune telling folly, tell me, what does the future hold?
- HUDSON** Oh I'm no astrologer, Mr Holmes, but I'll wager your retirement does not mean the end of your work as a detective.
- HOLMES** *[Mocking]* Madam, where is your tent and crystal ball?
- HUDSON** The world has changed, sir. Germany builds her war machine and a patriotic Englishman will surely serve his country.
- HOLMES** *[Genuinely impressed]* War does mean spies.
- HUDSON** And spies are uncovered by brilliant minds. Yours.
- HOLMES** *[Pause]* Why have you waited so long to say so much?
[Mood is sombre. The cut and thrust has both of them thinking. It's a pensive mood]
- HUDSON** *[Shrugs]* Women are the invisible sex.
- HOLMES** Not in your case.
- HUDSON** Tell me, Mr Holmes, is there one case you would have loved to investigate but didn't?
- HOLMES** There is.
- HUDSON** Would I know this case?
- HOLMES** You would.
- HUDSON** Will you describe it?
- HOLMES** Murder.
- HUDSON** A murder?
- HOLMES** Plural.

HUDSON Not?

HOLMES Yes.

HUDSON *[Gasps]* The Ripper!

HOLMES *[Slow burning anger]* The Ripper, Mrs Hudson, where vile deeds were matched only by police incompetence.

HUDSON *[Breathless]* And ... the identity of Jack the Ripper?

HOLMES *[Slow build up of anger from HOLMES]* It remains a hidden scandal and the height of stupidity that Scotland Yard chose to ignore my services.

HUDSON I have often wondered why you didn't solve that case.

HOLMES Quite simply, madam, because I wasn't asked.

HUDSON *[Shocked]* But that is scandalous.

HOLMES And far worse is the fact that to catch the Ripper, London's finest police chose an amateur.

HUDSON An *amateur*?

HOLMES Can you believe Scotland Yard took a novelist on a guided tour of the murder scenes?

HUDSON A novelist?

HOLMES Truth is strange, indeed stranger than fiction.

HUDSON But you have solved so many crimes. You have saved police reputations and always given them the credit.

HOLMES And in return they ignored me and turned to a hack.

HUDSON A hack?

HOLMES Yes, that novelist Hoyle

HUDSON Hoyle?

HOLMES What? Ah, no, Boyle.

HUDSON Do you mean Doyle?

HOLMES That's him. *[Scornful]* Hysterical novels and populist fiction.

HUDSON *[Shocked]* Sir Arthur Conan Doyle investigated Jack the Ripper?

HOLMES That sanctimonious Scot was given a police escort around Whitechapel in the pathetic hope he would discover whodunit, whilst here I stood, a short cab ride across London, with my superior skills ignored.

HUDSON But that is outrageous!

HOLMES I have solved crimes by deciphering handwriting, examining bloodstains, and locating hidden evidence – all the trademarks of the Ripper.

HUDSON And you know London.

HOLMES Know it! I thrive on its alleys, dives and criminals.

HUDSON But the Ripper struck fifteen years ago. Surely now it is too late.

HOLMES It is never too late for Sherlock Holmes.

HUDSON What an opportunity missed.

HOLMES I should be not be surprised, madam, if one hundred years from now, the identity of Jack the Ripper remains unknown.

HUDSON *[Pause. Quieter]* Is that why you began taking drugs?

- HOLMES** Theories will abound but the truth will be hidden because Scotland Yard ignored my genius. *[Pause. Looks at her]* What did you say?
- HUDSON** Is that why you took drugs?
- HOLMES** *[Peeved]* Drugs? What on Earth are you talking about?
- HUDSON** Perhaps not being asked to catch the Ripper and being replaced by a loopy spiritualist pushed you over the edge.
- HOLMES** *[Peeved]* Oh for pity's sake, my drug-taking is blown out of all proportion.
- HUDSON** Then perhaps my articles could tell the real story?
- HOLMES** Madam, I *occasionally* injected modest amounts of cocaine.
- HUDSON** But why?
- HOLMES** *[Angry that this trifling matter is being discussed]* Because I was bored.
- HUDSON** *[Ready to take notes]* Bored?
- HOLMES** Yes! I cannot live without brainwork. I crave mental exaltation.
- HUDSON** So being busy was important?
- HOLMES** Vitally important. Give me problems and I'll ignore artificial stimulants.
- HUDSON** Which I believe was cocaine?
- HOLMES** *[Educating her]* Because in Victorian England, the consumption of cocaine was legal, regal and universal.
- HUDSON** Surely not.
- HOLMES** *[Pointing outside]* You can buy it over the counter at the corner store.
- HUDSON** *[Shocked]* Never!
- HOLMES** It's not some classified, illegal substance.
- HUDSON** But regal, Mr Holmes, and universal?
- HOLMES** Our dear late Sovereign's favourite tippie was a cocktail with cocaine.
- HUDSON** *[Incredulous]* The Queen took cocaine?
- HOLMES** And Her Majesty was not alone as almost the entire population drank *Coca Cola* – so named because it contains *coke-ain*.
- HUDSON** *[Stunned]* But I once drank *Coca Cola*.
- HOLMES** Then you, me, half of London and our late, great Queen have all enjoyed a wee toke of the coke.
- HUDSON** *[Stunned]* Oh dear.
- HOLMES** So may one now assume your 'Detective Hooked on Drugs' article will lose its sensational headline?
- HUDSON** *[Still can't believe this information]* The Queen took cocaine?
- HOLMES** All this business about me taking drugs is a storm in a tea-cup. *[Big change. Quieter, thinking aloud]* Although it might cover the other.
- HUDSON** *[Doesn't follow]* I'm sorry. I missed that.
- HOLMES** *[Still thinking aloud]* Cocaine covers articulate landlady.
- HUDSON** *[Still uncertain]* To whom are you referring?
- HOLMES** *[Angry]* You of course.
- HUDSON** Me?
- [HUDSON gets progressively worried building to her distress at the end of the act]*
- HOLMES** Yes, the say-nothing landlady who is privately perspicacious.
- HUDSON** Well I wasn't *trying* to be secretive.

- HOLMES** Trying or not, you certainly fooled me.
- HUDSON** But I was happy just being able to observe your brilliant skills.
- HOLMES** When all the time you were analysing people and studying clues.
- HUDSON** They say it's good to keep your mind active.
- HOLMES** And the world's finest consulting detective detected nothing.
- HUDSON** But why would you? I'm not one of your cases.
- HOLMES** You realise I'm now a complete failure.
- HUDSON** Oh Mr Holmes, please, it's a minor hiccup.
- HOLMES** Minor hiccup? It's the dinosaur in the dining-room. It's the phenomenal faux pas.
- HUDSON** You exaggerate. And besides, who's going to believe an old woman?
- HOLMES** The whole world once you write for the *Strand* magazine. *[Starts to exit]*
My crown has fallen and the sooner I depart London and you the better.
- HUDSON** *[Distressed]* No sir. Please!
- HOLMES** *[Pointing]* And don't you dare give my Sussex address to anyone.
- HUDSON** *[Distressed]* No sir, I won't, of course not. I promise.
- HOLMES** I'm about to become Holmes the laughing-stock.
- HUDSON** Oh now you're being silly.
- HOLMES** I've totally failed to observe the bleeding obvious. *[At door, angry]* You!
[He exits. HUDSON is stunned. Muttering, she moves to her scrapbook]
- HUDSON** *[Distressed]* Oh my lord. *[Thinking aloud distress builds]* The Queen and I took cocaine, Mr Holmes was ignored by Scotland Yard, *[Anxious]* Jack the Ripper is still at large *[Distressed]* and now I've done the most terrible thing. It's unforgivable. *[Dramatic]* I've ruined Sherlock Holmes.
[Blackout. Dramatic music begins. HUDSON exits. House lights come up]

INTERVAL

Act Two

[As the second act is about to begin, solo violin music plays. Lights come up on the sitting-room a few hours later. The stage lighting reveals that the sitting-room lights are out with the darkness 'broken' only by a glow from the fireplace and/or moonlight or a streetlamp from Baker Street giving a blue tinge. HOLMES is wearing a dressing-gown over his pyjamas, slippers and some sort of sleeping headgear – a night-cap.]

He is reclining on the settee, asleep. In the dim light we can just see him. He gives a small snore to reinforce his presence to the audience. Once the scene has been established, HUDSON enters. She wears a night dress under her dressing-gown, slippers and a cap of sorts. Instead of a dressing-gown, she could have a large shawl draped over her shoulders. She carries a battery-powered candle and moves to the table to collect her scrapbook. She has no idea that HOLMES is in the room]

HUDSON *[Talking to herself, despairing]* What have I done? I can't believe what I've done. The whole thing's blown up in my face. I'll be despised by everyone, by anyone who loves and respects Mr Holmes.

[Takes heart] But it's not too late. *[Indicating scrapbook]* No-one knows about this. I'll say nothing. I'll go back to being the invisible landlady. I'll tell the *Strand* magazine I'm a boring old woman. I'll never mention those articles again.

[Now timing is important here. HOLMES gives small snore and HUDSON reacts with short sharp scream]

HUDSON Mr Holmes!

[This awakens HOLMES who sits up. Alternatively she could sit on end of settee and discover HOLMES by accident thus getting a fright, giving a small scream and awakening the sleeping sleuth]

HOLMES *[Surprised]* Mrs. Hudson.

HUDSON *[Startled, clasps heart]* You scared me half to death.

HOLMES What on Earth are you doing up at this hour? Why, it's two twenty-one in the morning.

HUDSON I couldn't sleep

HOLMES Nor I. *[Crossing to turn on lamp after which quiet lighting comes up]* I've been thinking about your revelations. And I've made an important decision.

HUDSON So have I.

HOLMES I've decided to face the music.

HUDSON *[Confused]* Oh?

HOLMES I've decided to tell the world I've totally failed to observe your brilliance and wit.

HUDSON Tell the world?

HOLMES Write those articles, dear lady. Reveal my faults and failings. Expose everything.

HUDSON Oh dear.

HOLMES Now, what is *your* important decision?

HUDSON Ah, I've changed my mind and no longer wish to write my memoirs.

HOLMES *[Shocked]* Changed your mind?

HUDSON I could never match the writing skills of Doctor Watson.

- HOLMES** *[Goes and takes her scrapbook]* On the contrary, madam. And allow me to prove it by reading more of your enthralling scrapbook.
- HUDSON** *[Mild panic]* No, please, there's nothing of interest.
- HOLMES** Nothing of interest? This humble tome will re-write history.
- HUDSON** Mr Holmes, it's very late.
- HOLMES** *[Looking through pages]* And I wish to learn from the woman of substance, my enlightened landlady. *[Indicates]* So please, do sit.
[HUDSON nervously sits and HOLMES takes control. What will he find? HUDSON is nervous. He reads book] Extraordinary.
- HUDSON** *[Uncomfortable]* Mr Holmes, I wish to remain anonymous.
- HOLMES** *[Reading book]* I say!
- HUDSON** *[More discomfort]* Please.
- HOLMES** *[Reading]* 'Is Sherlock Holmes gay?'
- HUDSON** *[Sudden concern. She thought he would discover her 'romantic' page]* No!
- HOLMES** *[Reading]* 'Is Sherlock Holmes gay and funny?'
- HUDSON** *[Doesn't want him to continue]* They're only a few rough notes.
- HOLMES** *[Reading]* 'Comical comments about Holmes and Watson'.
- HUDSON** *[Dismissing same]* It's nonsense, a trifle; please stop.
- HOLMES** My, my, you *have* been busy. Are all these names real?
- HUDSON** No, they're fictitious, just people poking fun.
- HOLMES** *[Reading]* 'Alternative names for Sherlock Holmes.'
- HUDSON** They are not at all amusing.
- HOLMES** *[HOLMES enjoys reading. He does so aloud in groups of three]* 'Sherlock Bones. Sherlock Groans. Sherlock Thrones. ✓ Surelick Holmes. Sheerluck Holmes. Mereluck Holmes. ✓ Shylock Holmes. Suburban Holmes. Stateluck Holmes.' ✓ Oh and here's an Irish one. 'Shamrock Holmes.'
[HOLMES amused]
- HUDSON** *[Half-amused]* I'm glad you like them. But please ...
- HOLMES** *[Discovers a new page. Reading in groups of three]* 'Alternative names for Dr Watson.' *[Reading with enjoyment]* 'Dr Flotsam. Dr Flopson. Dr Rotson. ✓ Dr What's-it. Dr What's-on. Dr What's-up.' *[Discovers his own joke]* I say, what's up Doc?
[HOLMES thinks it's amusing. HUDSON not happy]
- HUDSON** *[Goes to stand]* I'll make some tea. *[Sits as HOLMES continues]*
- HOLMES** *[Discovering]* And some of my cases. *[Interested]* Oh these are good.
[Reading] 'The Adventure of the Scarlet Pimple.' 'The Mystery of the Deerstalker.' *[Looks at HUDSON]* 'The Case of the Lunatic Landlady?'
- HUDSON** *[Embarrassed]* That was my pathetic attempt at humour.
- HOLMES** Ah, but here's my favourite. *[Reads]* 'The Hound of the Basketballs'.
[HOLMES amused]
- HUDSON** *[Goes to HOLMES and politely takes scrapbook]* Now this is all well and good, Mr Holmes, but it's late and you're off in the morning. *[She prepares to exit]*
- HOLMES** I am indeed. *[Pause as she heads to door. Serious]* But not before all is revealed.

HUDSON *[Stops]* I've told you I intend to reveal nothing.

HOLMES Oh come now. I believe you really want to write those articles.

HUDSON What I want is to never tarnish the glittering career of the world's finest consulting detective.

HOLMES I know that.

HUDSON *[Hopeful]* You do?

HOLMES I may have failed to observe the hidden Hudson but never her patience and constant kindness.

HUDSON *[Relieved and touched]* Oh thank you, Mr Holmes. So let us forget this whole 'writing articles' business.

HOLMES I prefer 'put aside'.

HUDSON I prefer 'forget'.

HOLMES Well whatever you decide, there must be some questions you wish to ask before I leave Baker Street?

HUDSON *[Shaking head]* No sir. Of questions have I none.

HOLMES You were clearly concerned about my dabbling in drugs.

HUDSON But no longer. That matter has been resolved.

HOLMES Oh come now, even Watson could tell you are dying to ask about my love life.

HUDSON *[Indignant]* Sir, that is not necessary and quite upsetting for a woman.

HOLMES But not just *any* woman; Mrs Hudson you are the one constant in my life. You, madam, know me *intimately*.

HUDSON There is such a thing as privacy, Mr Holmes.

HOLMES And there is such a thing as a scoop. Would not the editor of *The Strand* magazine be interested in the romantic Sherlock Holmes?
[HUDSON upset. She's decided never to reveal anything she knows about HOLMES]

HUDSON Sir, be told, I have abandoned my writing career.

HOLMES But *I* wish to set the record straight and why not just for you?

HUDSON It's very late.

HOLMES Where is the harm in revealing my private life only to you? *[Pause]* Well?

HUDSON *[Coming round]* I suppose there *is* no harm.

HOLMES Excellent. Then where shall we start?

HUDSON *[Flustered]* I ... I'm not sure.

HOLMES How about my affairs of the heart?

HUDSON *[Suddenly interested]* Affairs? Plural?

HOLMES Or lack thereof.

HUDSON *[Now she's hooked]* There *were* no affairs?

HOLMES Madam, you ask the questions and I'll give the answers.

HUDSON *[My goodness]* Oh my goodness.

HOLMES *[Making himself comfortable]* Let us make my final night one to remember.

HUDSON I'm afraid it's already that.

HOLMES Fire away, Mrs Hudson. The subject is Sherlock and sex!

HUDSON *[Flustered, mouths rather than speaks]* Sex?

- HOLMES** Try something like [*Pretending he's HUDSON*] 'Mr Holmes, have you ever been in love with a woman?'
- HUDSON** [*Reluctantly agrees to take part*] I'm not sure. Have you?
- HOLMES** No, no. That was you asking me.
- HUDSON** What about Miss Irene Adler? I know you were much taken with her.
- HOLMES** [*Annoyed*] Mrs Hudson, stop answering and start asking.
- HUDSON** [*Realises but is still unsure*] Oh dear, silly me.
- HOLMES** I've nothing to hide and [*Intimate*] who knows what I may disclose.
[*A fresh command*] Kindly begin.
- HUDSON** [*Pause. Clears throat. Formal*] Mr Holmes, why have you never married?
- HOLMES** Excellent question; being direct is always best.
- HUDSON** [*Having been given the green light, she lets rip*] Have you ever been in love?
- HOLMES** [*Slight surprise*] Two questions. Well done.
- HUDSON** Do you hate women?
- HOLMES** [*Mild protest*] Madam, not so fast.
- HUDSON** And are you homosexual?
- HOLMES** [*Pause*] Now don't hold back, Mrs. Hudson. Feel free to ask anything.
- HUDSON** [*Has shocked herself*] I can't believe I just said that.
[*The following speeches by HOLMES see him in reflective mood. He's assessing his own life. Comments by HUDSON are either ignored or downplayed. HOLMES goes back to another era when he was a much younger man. He remembers his past*]
- HOLMES** I remember discovering things about myself when quite young.
- HUDSON** [*Thinks she knows*] Ah, so it was your education. It's been said that English public-schools produce some of Britain's finest homosexuals.
[*Ignores her remarks as he remembers the crucial comment from old Mr Trevor many decades ago in The Adventure of the Gloria Scott*]
- HOLMES** At university, Victor Trevor was the only man I really knew.
- HUDSON** [*Delicate approach*] So you were both quite young at the time?
- HOLMES** He was the one friend I made in two years.
- HUDSON** Well, I suppose you only need one friend.
- HOLMES** Victor told his father I was a brilliant detective and the old man challenged me. [*Smiles, happy memories*] I revealed so much about him, his response changed my life.
- HUDSON** [*Confused*] I thought we were discussing sex.
- HOLMES** [*Remembers well those words of long ago. Imitates Norfolk farmer*] "It seems to me that all the detectives of fact and of fancy would be children in your hands. That's your line of life, sir."
- HUDSON** [*Confused*] And that speech made you a bachelor?
- HOLMES** "That's your line of life." [*At her*] You see I was *destined* to detect. No wife or children would ever smother my sleuthing skills.
- HUDSON** Which is not as eye-catching as '*Sleuth in Scandal*' or '*Homosexual Holmes*'.
[*HOLMES ignores this and re-lives his past. They ignore one another*]

- HOLMES** I made my mark in life *because* I was single.
- HUDSON** [*Thinking aloud*] I can't imagine a Missus Holmes.
- HOLMES** As a bachelor, I was free to turn my hobby into a profession.
- HUDSON** [*Still thinking aloud*] Or you as a father.
- HOLMES** By choosing the single life, I helped create the science of detection.
- HUDSON** [*Serious*] Where presumably your motto became, "No sex, Sherlock".
- HOLMES** [*Back at her*] You see love is emotional and opposed to cold reason which I place above all else.
- HUDSON** You are the romance-free sleuth.
- HOLMES** Had I pursued love, there would *be* no Sherlock Holmes.
- HUDSON** And that is why there has never been a woman in your life.
- HOLMES** Mrs. Hudson, *you* are the woman in my life.
- HUDSON** Most kind, but I think we both know the subject to which I refer.
- HOLMES** [*Mimics her speech*] *Think*, Mrs Hudson? Either you know or you don't. Spit it out, woman; speak plainly.
[*HUDSON takes a breath and goes for it*]
- HUDSON** Sir, have you remained single because you have similar inclinations to those of Mr Oscar Wilde?
- HOLMES** [*Pause then sudden but soft and burning fury*] Ye gods! Oscar Wilde!
- HUDSON** [*Upset*] I am so sorry.
- HOLMES** I am enraged to hear the name of Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde.
- HUDSON** [*Contrite*] I do apologise, sir.
- HOLMES** That grotesque affair was beneath contempt.
- HUDSON** [*Contrite but mistakenly so*] Forgive me. I am well aware that many considered Mr Wilde's behaviour to be unspeakably evil.
- HOLMES** [*Shocked that she's got it wrong*] *Wilde's* behaviour? Madam, I refer to that moronic Marquis of Queensberry and those so-called moral bastions of London society.
- HUDSON** [*Shocked*] I'm afraid I don't follow.
- HOLMES** Queensberry is typical of men who regard women as chattel; a red-necked brute unable even to spell the Queen's English. [*Scoffs*] *Somdomite*.
- HUDSON** [*Thrown by his anger*] I think we have strayed from the subject Mr Holmes.
- HOLMES** Oh for pity's sake, let us call a spade by its proper name. This city, the entire world has married fathers who are homosexual and steadfast bachelors who are heterosexual. Kindly avoid myths and assumptions.
- HUDSON** I wish to avoid everything.
- HOLMES** Isaac Newton, Leonardo da Vinci and Ludwig van Beethoven were bachelors. Do you probe their private lives?
- HUDSON** No, of course not.
- HOLMES** Not forgetting a certain Jewish carpenter.
- HUDSON** [*Shocked*] Mr Holmes!
- HOLMES** Victorian England was a classic example of raging hypocrisy.
- HUDSON** You obviously know far more than I.

- HOLMES** Wilde is castigated by ‘respectable’ gentlemen who visit their prostitutes and mistresses before returning home to infect their loving wives.
- HUDSON** *[Shocked]* This cannot be true.
- HOLMES** Why are so many women reduced to squalor?
- HUDSON** *[Distressed]* Mr Holmes, I have no knowledge of these unsavory subjects.
- HOLMES** Abuse by brutish men. Many women are forced into prostitution by appalling men who remain respectable and unpunished.
- HUDSON** Let us please change the subject.
- HOLMES** Society provides that well-known women’s refuge – the gutter; *[Pointing to scrapbook]* perhaps you might pen an article about that.
- HUDSON** *[Confused]* I am finding this extremely difficult, Mr Holmes.
- HOLMES** Oh do not feign ignorance, madam.
- HUDSON** *[Distressed]* I am feigning nothing and furthermore, I beg you to cease.
- HOLMES** But you have expressed interest in my private life.
- HUDSON** You offered to discuss your romantic affairs.
- HOLMES** *[Correcting her]* Or lack thereof.
- HUDSON** I accept I may have crossed the line with my scrapbook but I did not ask for a sermon on the evils of mankind. I know nothing of this moral turpitude and moreover, have no wish to know.
- HOLMES** But you are much closer to the truth than you imagine.
- HUDSON** *[Defends herself]* That sir is a monstrous lie. I have never in any way been familiar with depravity.
- HOLMES** Tell me; how many young women have you escorted into this very room?
- HUDSON** Dozens, perhaps hundreds.
- HOLMES** And how many worked as a governess?
- HUDSON** So many, I cannot say.
- HOLMES** And so many who may well now be fallen women.
- HUDSON** *[Angry]* Now that is enough. Kindly remember you are a gentleman.
- HOLMES** The life of a governess in Victorian England was fraught with danger. She ate alone in her room with only letters from her mother. And if the young man of the family or the household head himself chose to abuse the defenceless young woman, and many did, then another female’s life was ruined.
- HUDSON** *[This is news to HUDSON. She is shocked]* That is shocking. I am dismayed.
- HOLMES** I may never have loved a woman, Mrs Hudson, but I have indeed hated the pitiful plight of so many of your sex.
- HUDSON** *[Pause]* Thank you, Mr Holmes.
- HOLMES** *[Surprised]* Thank you?
- HUDSON** In spite of your disparaging remarks about women and your absence of emotion, I now see you indeed have feelings; and noble ones at that.
- HOLMES** *[Preparing to exit. He is softer]* And you, madam, are the only person to have heard such remarks which you will now never repeat. *[Pause]* Is that clear?

- HUDSON** *[She wants to report his feelings]* But Mr Holmes, this information must be made known.
- HOLMES** Never.
- HUDSON** *[Still keen]* Sherlock Holmes has a heart. He *does* care and passionately about love, kindness and respect. The world must be told you are human.
- HOLMES** What happened to *[Mimics her]* “I’m so glad we can forget the whole thing”?
- HUDSON** What happened to, “Reveal my faults and failings. Tell everything”?
[Pause. HOLMES breathing heavily]
- HOLMES** If, *if* you write your articles, you may only reveal my untidiness, tobacco tastes and indoor revolver practice.
- HUDSON** But it’s your feelings, your inner thoughts which are so important.
- HOLMES** *[Definite]* Never repeat my inner thoughts.
- HOLMES** But they could change the unconscionable behaviour of certain men.
- HOLMES** Madam, I have no desire for personal glory.
- HUDSON** This is not about personal glory; this is about truth and help for the weak.
- HOLMES** *[Definite]* Enough!
- HUDSON** People think you are a machine when really you are sensitive and care deeply about the welfare of humankind.
- HOLMES** *[Preparing to retire – again]* I care deeply about my sleep.
- HUDSON** *[Wants to keep him talking]* Oh Mr Holmes, please don’t go. Not now you’ve proved to be caring and compassionate.
- HOLMES** I bid you goodnight; or is it good morning?
- HUDSON** *[Desperate to keep him in the room]* Does insanity run in your family?
- HOLMES** *[Stops, what on Earth is she talking about]* Insanity?
- HUDSON** Is there some scientific explanation why you and your brother have so peculiar an attitude to women?
- HOLMES** *[Irritation rising]* Peculiar?
- HUDSON** You are two peas in a female-free pod.
- HOLMES** Madam I accept you are erudite and intelligent. Why now demean yourself with tittle-tattle?
- HUDSON** Both you and your brother are bachelors with little time for women, and a marked dislike for gossip. Does this suggest you have an unsociable gene?
- HOLMES** Your reputation as an independent thinker is in imminent danger.
- HUDSON** To have one brother a social cripple, Mr Holmes, may be regarded as a misfortune. To have both ...
- FX** *[Sound of person banging on door in street. HOLMES and HUDSON startled. Whole mood changes. It could be the SM or stage hand speaking live and making the FX]*
- HOLMES** Hush! Be still!
- HUDSON** *[Anxious]* What was that?
- HOLMES** *[Moving to dim light]* Remain calm, Mrs Hudson. Stay where you are.
[Lights dim when HOLMES reaches switch]
- HUDSON** It’s a person from one of your cases. *[Blackout – eerie light only]*

HOLMES I will always have enemies. *[Heads towards window]*
FX *[Recorded voice of angry man outside in the street]* I know you're in there.
HUDSON *[Afraid]* Oh my lord. Is it Jack the Ripper?
HOLMES *[By window but without being seen, looks out into street]* I'll deal with this.
HUDSON You told me Professor Moriarty was dead.
HOLMES He is but not his agents.
FX *[Man in street]* I'm going to fix you good and proper.
HUDSON *[Distressed]* Mr Holmes, you're going to be murdered.
HOLMES Strange, I don't recognize that particular villain.
HUDSON *[Distressed]* Oh this is terrible. One more night and you would have been safe. One more night.
HOLMES *[Annoyed]* Mrs Hudson, the matter is under control.
FX *[Sound of more banging on door. HOLMES and HUDSON startled again. Voice]*
Nobody does this to me and gets away with it.
[The pace needs a steady accelerando. There is danger outside. HUDSON is fearful. HOLMES frustrated that he doesn't know the intruder. Build the tension]
HOLMES If only Watson were here. *[Starts searching at table]* Where are his notes?
HUDSON What can I do, Mr Holmes?
HOLMES *[Still searching]* Fetch my revolver. *[HUDSON moves to window]*
HUDSON *[Peers into street. Shocked]* Oh no!
HOLMES *[Searching]* My revolver, madam.
HUDSON *[Shocked as she identifies the man in the street]* That's Mr Hurstpank.
HOLMES *[Stops searching]* What? *[Crossing to her]* You know him?
HUDSON He's violent, Mr Holmes. We feared this might happen.
HOLMES We? Who's we?
HUDSON Mrs Hurstpank is my friend.
FX *[Voice]* This is your final warning.
HOLMES But I'm the detective with the crazy clients.
HUDSON Let me speak to him.
HOLMES How dare you upstage me; and on my final night at Baker Street.
FX *[Voice]* Open up or I light the fire.
HUDSON Fire!
HOLMES I am the consulting detective. You are the landlady.
[Slanging match develops between HOLMES and HUDSON]
HUDSON *[Snaps back]* Who happens to be a suffragette.
HOLMES *[Shocked]* A what?
HUDSON I persuaded Mrs. Hurstpank to join the suffragettes and now hubby's not happy.
HOLMES *[Shocked]* You are a suffragette?
HUDSON I've already told you that!
HOLMES Yes, four seconds ago.
FX *[Voice]* I warned you!
HUDSON *[Pointing to door]* Look, smoke! *[Smoke wafts into room from under door]*
HOLMES *[Hero Holmes moving to door]* I'll handle the fire. You ... stand still.

HUDSON *[Opening window]* Leave it to me, Mr Holmes.
HOLMES *[Opening door calling back to HUDSON]* Get my revolver!
HUDSON *[Calling through open window]* Mr Hurstpank. Hello.
HOLMES *[Has opened door]* It's only my smoke-machine for the bees.
[Closes door, smoke fades]
FX *[Voice – louder]* There you are.
HOLMES *[Crossing to window]* Come away, madam. The man is violent.
HUDSON *[Calling]* Do be a good fellow and go home. You're disturbing my tenant.
FX *[Voice – louder]* I'll do more than disturb.
HUDSON It's Mr Sherlock Holmes.
FX *[Voice]* Who?
HUDSON *[More definite]* Mr Sherlock Holmes.
FX *[Voice]* Never heard of him.
HOLMES *[Indignant]* What?
HUDSON *[Calling]* I'll call round tomorrow. Off you go now. Good night.
[Closes window]
FX *[Voice softer]* You haven't heard the last of this.
[Now the pace and mood slow and return to that of before Hurstpank's rowdy rant]
HUDSON *[Heading to light]* All fixed, Mr Holmes.
HOLMES *[Offended]* Well pardon me for interrupting your life.
HUDSON I take it you do not approve of suffragettes.
HOLMES Women and violence do not fit.
HUDSON For someone so emphatically in favour of the well-being of women, you are decidedly anti-women when it comes to their right to vote.
HOLMES I'm anti women who detonate bombs and set fire to the Royal mail.
HUDSON Desperate times, desperate measures.
HOLMES *[Looks at her]* I see. *[Despair begins slowly]* In fact, I now see everything.
HUDSON Not your usual Baker Street night, Mr Holmes?
HOLMES *[Imitates Hurstpank]* "Never heard of him."
HUDSON I'm sorry?
HOLMES The man in the street has never heard of Sherlock Holmes.
HUDSON Oh he's a bit odd and I think a little deaf.
HOLMES For twenty years I failed to observe the brilliance of my own landlady and now I'm anonymous.
HUDSON *[Don't be so serious]* Mr Holmes.
HOLMES I've become Sherlock Watson.
HUDSON *[Pause, staring at him. Points or looks closely]* Sir? Mr Holmes?
HOLMES What?
HUDSON *[Can't believe it]* Is, is that a tear?
HOLMES *[Wipes eye]* And what if it is?
HUDSON *[Delighted]* Oh how wonderful.
HOLMES *[Confused]* Wonderful?
HUDSON It means you're human, like everyone else; it proves you have feelings.

- HOLMES** It means I'm incompetent and unknown.
- HUDSON** It means Dr Watson is wrong. *[Emphatic]* You are not a machine.
- HOLMES** It's considered poor form, madam, to gloat over your enemy's misfortune.
- HUDSON** *[Back to serious]* Oh you misunderstand.
- HOLMES** My feet of clay are exposed. You've shown up my failure. Now kindly allow me to gather what dignity I have and retire in obscurity.
- HUDSON** *[Concerned]* Mr Holmes.
- HOLMES** I wish to indulge in a solid serving of self-pity. *[Pause. Emphasis]* Good night, Mrs Hudson.
[HUDSON upset moves to door]
- HUDSON** I wish I'd never said a word.
- HOLMES** *[Doesn't look at her]* Good night. *[He means 'get out']*
[HUDSON pauses, then moves quickly to scrapbook and takes it to fireplace. HOLMES can't help but watch]
What are you doing? *[He starts to move to her]* Madam?
- HUDSON** *[Trying to rip pages from her scrapbook]* I'm setting fire to my damned scrapbook.
- HOLMES** *[Hurrying to her]* No! Stop! Stop! *[They struggle with the book at the fireplace]*
- HUDSON** Leave me alone.
- HOLMES** You cannot burn this book.
- HUDSON** I'm a suffragette and I'll do what I bloody well like.
- HOLMES** I'll accept suffragette but not barbarian.
[She releases her hold on book and is stunned. HOLMES holds the book]
- HUDSON** *[Pause. Stunned]* Barbarian?
- HOLMES** *[Indicating book]* This is history, a priceless, unique resource.
- HUDSON** *[Upset]* And the cause of your ruined reputation. *[Almost breaks down]* I never wanted to hurt you.
- HOLMES** I know that.
- HUDSON** All I wanted was to keep your genius alive - forever.
- HOLMES** *[Leads her to sit]* Come now, do not upset yourself.
- HUDSON** *[Sits but determined]* All this was never my wish or plan.
- HOLMES** *[Softer]* We're both upset. It's been an unusual final night.
- HUDSON** *[Slower]* I'm sorry to have caused such a ... surprise.
[Reflective. The conversation is slowing down and drawing to a close – for now]
- HOLMES** Surprise is an understatement.
- HUDSON** *[Half a smile]* I suppose it was unexpected.
- HOLMES** So then, what for you has been tonight's most extraordinary event?
- HUDSON** *[Thinking]* Ah, perhaps the topics.
- HOLMES** *[Nods]* They were certainly different.
- HUDSON** For decades we only ever talked about tea and supper. Oscar Wilde and Jack the Ripper never featured in our previous conversations.
- HOLMES** Quite.
- HUDSON** Which makes your departure an even greater pity.
- HOLMES** Oh?

- HUDSON** After 23 years we've finally found something to talk about.
- HOLMES** [*Smiles*] True.
- HUDSON** And now you're off to the country.
- HOLMES** But not without one final mystery.
- HUDSON** [*Doesn't understand*] Mr Holmes?
- HOLMES** How you have been transformed from a dour domestic to a wise and witty woman.
- HUDSON** Actually I've always been wise and witty; it's just that you've never noticed.
- HOLMES** Touché.
- HUDSON** So then what for you has been tonight's most extraordinary event?
- HOLMES** That's easy; the Greek tragedy of course. How the mighty have fallen.
- HUDSON** Oh tosh, it's nothing of the sort.
- HOLMES** Madam, without doubt my good name has been besmirched.
- HUDSON** [*Shocked*] Now that is absurd.
- HOLMES** In my lengthy career I have detected the size of a dog from a walking-stick, a man's travel destinations from a tattoo and submerged evidence from a missing dumb-bell. Yet despite sharing the same abode for decades, about you I have detected nothing. I have utterly failed to observe your true nature and abilities.
- HUDSON** But none of that matters now as I've decided not to write any articles.
- HOLMES** [*He's serious*] Imagine what Scotland Yard and the criminal fraternity will say when they hear I ignored my wise and wonderful landlady. On the eve of retirement, my international reputation is ruined.
- HUDSON** Mr Holmes, your secret is safe with me.
- HOLMES** [*He's bitter and angry*] This is the end of Sherlock Holmes.
- HUDSON** [*Distressed*] No!
- HOLMES** I'll become a laughing stock. I might as well believe in ghosts and fairies.
- HUDSON** But no-one need ever know.
- HOLMES** You know!
- HUDSON** And I'll say nothing, Mr Holmes, you have my word.
- HOLMES** Say nothing? You're about to publish your memoirs.
- HUDSON** [*Adamant*] Sir, my scrapbook is no threat to your career.
- HOLMES** [*Worried*] I can see no possible solution.
- HUDSON** You don't need a solution. There *is* no problem.
- HOLMES** Unless of course this whole episode is a charade?
- HUDSON** [*Confused*] Pardon?
- HOLMES** Unless this evening is one giant practical joke.
- HUDSON** No. *No*.
- HOLMES** Come on, confess. Are you *really* well read with a vast knowledge of my methods and cases.
- HUDSON** My scrapbook is real.

- HOLMES** And what of that letter from *The Strand* magazine? Is that real?
- HUDSON** *[Surprised]* You mean you can't tell?
[The penny drops. HOLMES has made one last attempt at salvaging his reputation but has only made things worse]
- HOLMES** *[Weary, sits]* Oh no. I've lost my genius. *[Head in hands]* Goliath toppled by David.
[Tempo slows. She takes her time]
- HUDSON** *[Genuine]* You must know I never wished to upset you, Mr Holmes.
- HOLMES** I've fallen at the final jump. A finale of failure.
- HUDSON** *[Wants to help]* Mr Holmes, do you consider me trustworthy?
- HOLMES** The death of a detective.
- HUDSON** Mr Holmes?
- HOLMES** *[Comes back down to Earth]* What?
- HUDSON** Am I trustworthy?
- HOLMES** Of course, without question.
- HUDSON** Then rest assured, sir, I will never again mention the events of this night.
- HOLMES** *[Emotional]* But I do not want that.
- HUDSON** And *I* do not want your good name to suffer.
- HOLMES** But you must tell the world the truth.
- HUDSON** Why? Who cares?
- HOLMES** I care.
- HUDSON** Well, why not a compromise? I shall write articles only about being your landlady.
- HOLMES** Only?
- HUDSON** I will appeal to women readers and the odd Sherlockian zealot.
- HOLMES** *[Quietly impressed]* You would do this for me?
- HUDSON** Willingly.
- HOLMES** But I would rather you exhibit your true abilities.
- HUDSON** Then perhaps when you have well and truly retired.
- HOLMES** You mean, when I am dead?
- HUDSON** Sherlock Holmes will never die.
- HOLMES** *[Nods his appreciation]* I have learnt so much in just one night.
- HUDSON** And I have learnt so much for more than twenty years. *[Her 'thank you' speech]* I admire and respect your brilliance. I salute your love of truth and justice. I rejoice in having met a man who changed the world.
- HOLMES** *[Moved by her words]* Mrs Hudson.
- HUDSON** It has been an honour to serve the world's greatest consulting detective.
[She raises a hand meaning there's no need for him to say anymore. He prepares to leave]
- HOLMES** Thank you, dear lady. Now let us conclude with fond farewells. I bid you goodnight.

[They could bow and he exits but stops at door as she speaks]

HUDSON Without solving your greatest mystery. *[Pause. HOLMES stands in doorway]*
Yourself.

HOLMES Ah, incisive till the last.

HUDSON Why does the world know so little of your inner thoughts? Why are we in awe of your skill yet ignorant of the sacrifices you made to achieve such greatness? What are you really like?

HOLMES And does anyone care?

HUDSON *[She starts to pack up. The interview is over]* I'm sure there is one question for which you desperately seek an answer?

HOLMES There is. *[Pause]* I would like to know if my methods will still be talked about one hundred years from now.

HUDSON I shall never forget you, Mr Holmes. *[Suddenly a little livelier]* But I'll be away to m'bed. Sleep well, sir. *[Exiting]* Good night.

HOLMES Good night, Mrs Hudson.

HUDSON *[At door]* And you *will* be talked about one hundred years from now. *[They exchange nods/smiles]* Oh and don't forget that letter from the good doctor. *[She exits. Lighting could dim a little with the room seemingly only lit by the fire glow or a streetlamp from Baker Street or both]*

HOLMES *[To an absent landlady]* The great unsolved mystery, madam, is you. And I do not even know your first name. *[Looks around]* Goodnight Baker Street. *[He collects letter, sits and reads. We are privy to the thoughts of the good doctor]*

My Dear Holmes

*So your detecting days are over as you leave Baker Street for good.
I must say these past years have been extraordinary.*

[HOLMES smiles] Good old Watson.

[Back to reading the letter]

Ever since we first met I can confidently say, you are the most remarkable chap I have ever known. Unpleasant of course, downright rude and stubborn but most certainly remarkable.

[HOLMES smiles] Fine fellow.

I fondly remember our thrilling adventures and especially the trek to Switzerland.

I salute your incredible mind, your superhuman powers to observe and deduce where others, including the best of Scotland Yard, fell by the way.

HOLMES I'll thank you to get the simple things right. *[Waves letter]* This is not Watson's letter. *[MUSIC begins softly]*

HUDSON But the boy said 'from the good doctor'.

HOLMES *[Groans at twinge]* And my rheumatism is back.

HUDSON *[Moving to him]* Oh dear. *[By his side]* Dr Watson was correct. 'You *do* need nursing, Holmes.' *[She assists him to exit as the lights fade]* Come along. *[MUSIC swells and curtain falls]*

Rehearsal Material and Performing Rights

To stage *Nursing Holmes* you must first obtain written permission from Fox Plays

Email
admin@foxplays.com

Telephone
+61 03 9428 9064

Web page
www.foxplays.com

Other Sherlockian Shows

The Real Sherlock Holmes is a play about the life and work of Arthur Conan Doyle starring the author, his mother Mary and Mr Sherlock Holmes. A huge success wherever performed and the radio play version on CD wins high praise. *An utter delight! A very poignant script and performance.* **Classic Specialties, USA**

Sherlock Stock and Barrel is a musical play telling 25 stories from the Canon. 73 roles played by Holmes, Watson, Moriarty, Mrs Hudson and Miss Adler. *The Hound of the Baskervilles, The Speckled Band, The Valley of Fear, The Empty House, The Sign of Four* and many more. Fabulous reviews and the original cast album is a joy. *Dramatic, tuneful, ingenious and above all very funny.* **Roger Johnson UK**

Free preview scripts at www.foxplays.com