

CHARACTERS

WATSON
DR. EVANS
ORDERLY
MATRON
HOLMES 1
HOLMES 2
HOLMES 3
MORIARTY
THE WOMAN
THE CLIENT
SIGNOR FONSECA
THE INSPECTOR

HOLMES AND WATSON

Scene 1—Dr. Watson's Surgery

Lights up on—

*Watson, in an overcoat and hat. At his feet is a doctor's bag.
He holds a journal.*

WATSON. From the Journal of Dr. John H. Watson, M.D.

Opens journal, reads.

“Of the many unforeseen outcomes of the tragedy that befell Sherlock Holmes at the Falls of Reichenbach, surely the most frustrating fell under the category of ‘False Sightings.’ As Holmes’ body had not been retrieved, it was relatively simple for any number of frauds, fakes, and charlatans to come forward and lay claim to his identity. Naturally the task fell to me to disprove the many impersonators who made their presence known. Off I would go, by train, by boat, by horse and carriage, each time to be disappointed, as I knew each time I would be.”

Closes journal.

Until today. A telegram arrived.

Holds up a telegram.

“Dr. Watson, I write to inform you of a mystery. I have in my care three men, each of whom claims to be the late Mr. Sherlock Holmes. It is imperative that this matter be sorted out at once and in the deepest secrecy. A compartment has been reserved for you on the Scotsman leaving King’s Cross, connecting at Edinburgh to Starkhaven, then via ferry to the asylum.”

SFX: train whistle, steam.

Watson puts the telegram into his coat pocket and the journal into the doctor's bag.

Lights change.

Scene 2—Arrival

The asylum. The only furniture is a straight-backed chair and a round-topped chess table. On the table are a sherry decanter, two glasses, and a large medical dictionary.

SFX: rain outside.

Dr. Evans enters, in a suit.

DR. EVANS. Dr. Watson. I am Dr. Evans.

WATSON. Dr. Evans.

DR. EVANS. Did you travel well?

WATSON. All connections made.

DR. EVANS. Good.

An Orderly in a white uniform enters and takes Watson's coat and hat.

WATSON. I didn't know the last stage of the journey was to be...

DR. EVANS. An island?

WATSON. An island, yes.

DR. EVANS. Hence, the ferry. The crossing normally takes a quarter of an hour, but rough weather being what it is...

WATSON. Yes, quite.

DR. EVANS. Would you care to see your room and freshen up?

WATSON. My room?

DR. EVANS. The ferry runs only at very specific times, and as it's evening now, you won't be able to return to the mainland until morning.

WATSON. You don't have a boat here on the island?

DR. EVANS. A skiff, but I wouldn't attempt a crossing in this storm. That's why I had the room made up.

WATSON. If we were in a penny dreadful, this would be a ruse to have me locked up as a lunatic.

Watson laughs. Dr. Evans stares at him. Watson's laugh dies.

Joke.

DR. EVANS. I assumed as much.

WATSON. I'll go up later.

DR. EVANS. Would you like a sherry before we start? There may be something stronger.

WATSON. Perhaps when we've finished. I'm rather eager to have done with this.

DR. EVANS. Of course. Oh. Nearly forgot. Do you carry a side arm?

WATSON. I'm sorry?

DR. EVANS. A revolver.

WATSON. On occasion.

DR. EVANS. Do you have it on your person?

Beat.

Watson takes a revolver out of his pocket. The Orderly takes it from him.

WATSON. Here, now—

The Orderly hands the revolver to Dr. Evans, who examines it.

DR. EVANS. It's loaded.

WATSON. Not much good otherwise.

Dr. Evans gives the revolver to the Orderly.

DR. EVANS. It will be returned to you when you leave.

The Orderly exits with the gun, overcoat, doctor's bag, and hat.

WATSON. Dr. Evans, do you carry a side arm? Given that you're so security-minded.

DR. EVANS. You have yet to meet our patients.

WATSON. Your patients in general or these three in particular?

DR. EVANS. Most particularly these three. In answer to your question: No, I do not carry a revolver. We prefer to command our patients by other means.

WATSON. Do you mean to say there are *no* firearms on the premises?

DR. EVANS. Just yours.

WATSON. Doctor, how came these men to be under your care?

DR. EVANS. I'm afraid I cannot tell you that.

WATSON. I'm sorry?

DR. EVANS. The matter must be kept in the strictest confidence. When, or rather *if*, you identify one of the three as the man he claims to be, I will make the pertinent details known to you.

WATSON. So I'm to judge which is which, yes or no, without consideration as to *why*?

DR. EVANS. I assure you that I am acting under proper authority.

WATSON. (*After a beat.*) Right, then, let's get this over and done with.

Dr. Evans goes to the table and presses a bell/buzzer.

The Matron enters.

DR. EVANS. Matron, this is the gentleman who is going to assist us in our endeavor. He wishes to see the patients.

MATRON. Yes, doctor.

The Matron exits.

WATSON. May I ask a question?

DR. EVANS. Yes, of course.

WATSON. Was this place always...?

DR. EVANS. An asylum? Not at all. It was a fortress, then a light-house. Its isolation is perfect for our needs. There's a well-stocked library that I use as my office. There's even a music room. This was, in the original scheme of things, the great hall.

Lights change.

Scene 3—3X Holmes

Lights rise on—three men in silhouette u.s. c., facing upstage. The Orderly stands off to the side. He holds a truncheon.

DR. EVANS. (*Re: truncheon.*) Did they give you trouble?

ORDERLY. No, sir, not when they see my convincer.

The Orderly slaps the truncheon into his palm.

Watson tentatively takes a step towards the three men.

Sound/lights: flash powder explodes u.s. c., blinding Watson.

WATSON. What in...?

As the lights adjust we see a camera and tripod upstage of the three men. The Matron emerges from under its black cloth.

DR. EVANS. I'm sorry. We're compiling a photographic record of the patients. We hadn't the opportunity before now to catch the three of them together. We have been scrupulous in seeing to it that they do not intermingle.

The Matron claps her hands three times. The three men turn to face front. Light illuminates their faces:

Holmes 1, Holmes 2, and Holmes 3. Each tall, thin, sharp-featured, and well-cast as Sherlock Holmes.

Holmes 1 is a classic Holmes à la Sidney Paget. He wears a patient's uniform.

Holmes 2 is identical, but has long hair, a mustache and beard. There is a hint of Christ to him. He wears a straitjacket.

Holmes 3 is also identical, but his head is shaved clean. His face is pale, his cheeks sunken, his eyes glazed. He wears a patient's uniform.

Well, doctor, having known Mr. Holmes so well for so many years, this should be quick work for you. You may get closer, but I advise not too close.

Watson moves closer to Holmes 1. Then he moves on to Holmes 2. Then to Holmes 3. Then he steps away from them.

Escort them back now.

The Matron claps her hands twice.

Holmes 1 and Holmes 2 turn upstage. The Orderly turns Holmes 3 upstage.

The Matron claps her hands once. Holmes 1, Holmes 2, Holmes 3, and the Orderly exit offstage.

The Matron picks up the camera and tripod and exits.

So. Is the great detective here among us?

WATSON. Well, I... They are rather similar.

DR. EVANS. That has been the challenge.

WATSON. Of course, it *has* been three years. And none of these men appears to be at his physical best.

DR. EVANS. I hope you're not saying you don't recognize him. If you can't identify Mr. Holmes, I haven't a clue where we will turn. His brother Mycroft is reported to be on a mission of great sensitivity and cannot be reached. And your former landlady Mrs. Hudson is visiting her sister somewhere in the wilds of Wales. There aren't even any photographs of Mr. Holmes to make comparisons.

WATSON. Yes, I fear Holmes was notorious for not allowing his picture to be taken. Perhaps the patients might...well...speak?

DR. EVANS. *To you?*

WATSON. Yes.

DR. EVANS. What would you propose be the subject of your exchange?

WATSON. His return to life. How he survived the falls at Reichenbach.

DR. EVANS. (*Blandly.*) "Reichenbach."

WATSON. You *are* acquainted with the incident.

DR. EVANS. Not comprehensively. I know it was reported on at the time.

WATSON. The particulars were extremely condensed. My own was the fullest account.

DR. EVANS. I'm afraid I haven't read it. I don't care much for fiction.

WATSON. (*Bristles.*) My stories are not fiction.

DR. EVANS. They are *stories*, though. They appear *alongside* fiction in the popular press.

WATSON. Guilt by association?

DR. EVANS. Surely you don't claim they have the same veracity as news items.

WATSON. I take great pains in my writing to represent the incidents as accurately as possible.

DR. EVANS. I'm sorry, but accounts written long after the events they purport to portray combined with the demands of the market to shape a narrative to satisfy the public taste do suggest a certain, shall we say, imprecision.

WATSON. (*Cooly.*) What do you know of the case?

DR. EVANS. Just that Mr. Holmes died following an altercation with a retired teacher.

WATSON. (*Indignant.*) Professor Moriarty was the Napoleon of crime.

DR. EVANS. Delusions of grandeur there.

Lights change.

WATSON. It was the end of April three years ago. Holmes had set a trap for Moriarty which required the two of us go to the Continent. Upon our arrival Holmes found a telegram waiting for him from the Scotland Yard Inspector with whom he was working. Moriarty's gang had been arrested, but the professor had miraculously eluded capture. We set off again, passing close to the falls of Reichenbach.

Lights rise on—Reichenbach. Blue/gray mist.

SFX: hissing of the falls.

It is a fearful place. The torrent, the tremendous chasm lined by sheer glistening rock. Suddenly a lad came running down the path with a letter from the hotel we'd left that morning. An English lady was desperate to see a doctor.

Sherlock Holmes' silhouette appears, backlit by the mist.

As I left, I saw Holmes, his back against a rock, gazing down at the water. At the hotel, I found no English lady. She was a fiction. I raced back to the falls, but...

Sherlock Holmes' silhouette disappears.

...Holmes was gone. At the edge of the abyss I found a black top hat. Near it was Holmes' cigarette case. In it was a note, addressed

to me. He had known the boy's message was a ruse to separate us, and that Moriarty would be coming for him. There was little doubt that a physical contest had taken place, ending with their both reeling down into that dreadful cauldron.

Lights down on Reichenbach.

SFX out.

DR. EVANS. He had time to write a note?

WATSON. It was in consideration of my state of mind.

DR. EVANS. *Heroically* considerate, given the concerns that were pressing upon him. Was there a search made for bodies?

WATSON. By experts. But any attempt at recovering them from those waters was hopeless.

DR. EVANS. This can be corroborated?

WATSON. It's in my story.

DR. EVANS. "Story."

WATSON. Account.

DR. EVANS. Quite. So, if I allow these colloquies, you propose to bring them round to Mr. Holmes' resurrection, is that the idea?

WATSON. Yes.

DR. EVANS. And if they fail to provide a satisfactory explanation? Challenging such a delusion could shatter a fragile psyche.

WATSON. Or act as a curative.

Beat.

Dr. Evans presses the bell.

The Matron enters.

DR. EVANS. Bring in the first patient. Dr. Watson is going to speak to him.

MATRON. Yes, doctor.

The Matron exits.

WATSON. May I be alone with them?

DR. EVANS. That I cannot allow. I assure you it is in the interest of safety, your own as well as the patients'.

WATSON. You think my closest friend in the world will do me harm?

DR. EVANS. At least two of these men are not who they claim to be, which means they're either mad or of a criminal bent. And if one of them *is*, he may not be the man you once called friend.

WATSON. Dr. Evans, I swear I shall not hold you responsible for whatever may befall me.

Beat.

DR. EVANS. It is your decision.

The Orderly ushers in Holmes 1.

Dr. Evans and the Orderly exit.

Lights change.

Scene 4—Holmes 1

Holmes 1 looks at Watson.

HOLMES 1. Watson. You've lost weight.

WATSON. What makes you think that?

HOLMES 1. Your suit coat is a bit loose, and you've tightened your braces to take up the slack around your waist. A recent change, I surmise, as you've not had it taken in by a tailor. And you're smoking more than you used to, cigarettes, a new habit. Also, you've very recently been on the Continent. Your shoes are of an Italian make. Not the sort one finds in St. James Street. They're barely scuffed, so they were purchased not long ago.

WATSON. Right on all counts. Regarding weight, I must say you look as though you've lost a bit.

HOLMES 1. Well, I have been out and about. Safe and sound now, though. Are you here to take me from this place?

WATSON. That was my reason in coming.

HOLMES 1. Then, ring for them. Surely there can't be any uncertainty on your part.

WATSON. No, of course not. But you more than anyone must comprehend the need for...

HOLMES 1. Proof? What proof would you have me give you?

WATSON. Well, erm, how we met for example might be a—

HOLMES 1. We met at St. Bart's in the chemistry room, we were introduced by Stamford who was a dresser under you there, I was in the middle of an experiment regarding hemoglobin—

WATSON. Yes, I recall. I wrote about our first meeting in just those words.

HOLMES 1. Oh, I see. I know the details of our meeting because I have read your account of it.

WATSON. One might suggest so.

HOLMES 1. Well, then, something that will attest to my distinct, specific and exclusive knowledge of you: your snoring.

WATSON. I don't snore.

HOLMES 1. Those who do are seldom aware of it.

WATSON. Actually, I'd prefer the proof, as you call it, to be something more pertinent to the matter at hand.

HOLMES 1. For example?

WATSON. How it is you come to be alive.

HOLMES 1. Oh. That.

WATSON. Reichenbach. How did you get out of that dreadful chasm?

HOLMES 1. My dear fellow, I had no serious difficulty in getting out of it for the very simple reason that I never was *in* it.

WATSON. But the note you left—

HOLMES 1. I know. Barely minutes after you had left to care for the "English lady," I perceived a sinister figure standing behind me on the narrow pathway: Professor Moriarty.

Lights rise on—Reichenbach.

Moriarty's silhouette appears, backlit by the mist. He wears a black cloak, top hat, and carries a cane. He faces upstage.

SFX: hissing, rushing water.

Moriarty whose organization I had just destroyed, whose reason for being I had eliminated. Moriarty, his eyes a vortex of rage, rushed forward.

Moriarty suddenly turns front.

But not at *me*. At the falls. Out over the edge to his own annihilation. He fell for a long way, then struck a rock, bounded off, and disappeared into the water.

Moriarty's silhouette disappears.

In that instant it struck me what a chance Fate had given me. So rapidly does the brain act that I believe I thought it out before Moriarty had reached the bottom. I dashed off that note to you, then made my way across the mountains, covering ten miles in darkness. Four days later I arrived in Florence.

Lights down on Reichenbach.

SFX out.

I owe you many apologies, Watson, but it was all-important that it should be thought that I was dead, and I am quite certain you would not have written so convincing an account of my unhappy end had you not yourself thought it was true.

WATSON. No, I can quite see that. I have but one question.

HOLMES 1. What is that?

WATSON. Why? Why was it all-important that you should appear to be dead?

HOLMES 1. It was to confound my enemies. The remaining members of that charming society whose leader lies in the Reichenbach Falls.

Holmes 1 steps close to Watson.

(Sotto voce.) Did you bring your revolver with you?

WATSON. I brought it, but Dr. Evans took it from me.

HOLMES 1. You let him take your gun? We'll never get it back now!

Holmes 1 violently grabs Watson.

The Orderly rushes in, pulls Holmes 1 off Watson, thrusts Holmes 1 to the floor, then kneels on him, pinning him down.

Dr. Evans hurries in.

DR. EVANS. Have you got him?

ORDERLY. Yes, sir.

DR. EVANS. Are you all right?

WATSON. (*Coughs.*) ... Yes.

DR. EVANS. Take him back.

ORDERLY. Yes, doctor.

The Orderly pulls Holmes 1 to his feet and roughly pulls him offstage.

Lights change.

Scene 5—A Glass of Water

Watson adjusts his collar and tie, smooths his hair.

DR. EVANS. Are you sure he didn't do you any harm?

WATSON. I'm fine. Thank you.

DR. EVANS. You're bleeding. There.

Dr. Evans indicates Watson's lip. Watson reaches inside his breast pocket, takes out a handkerchief to dab his lip, puts it back, then feels the pocket.

What was it took place between the two of you?

WATSON. He became consternated. Anyone might in a place like this, kept under lock and key.

DR. EVANS. It has been necessary to do so, as you can now attest.

The Matron enters with a tray. On it is a glass of water.

Better drink this.

Watson picks up the glass, drinks, then puts the glass back.

WATSON. Thank you.

Dr. Evans nods to the Matron.

The Matron exits.

How did she know I needed...? You were listening.

DR. EVANS. (*Sheepish.*) The music room is just off there.

WATSON. You said I could see him alone.

DR. EVANS. And aren't you pleased that I misled you?

WATSON. He did me no harm.

DR. EVANS. But there *was something*.

WATSON. I don't know what you mean.

DR. EVANS. You searched your pockets just now. I thought the violence of the assault uncharacteristic of him. It wasn't so much an attack as an attempt to relieve you of something. Was he trying to take your revolver?

WATSON. *You* took my revolver.

DR. EVANS. *He* didn't know that.

WATSON. He took nothing from me. On my word of honor.

DR. EVANS. And your conversation, did it touch upon the subject of Reichenbach?

WATSON. I'm sure you heard.

DR. EVANS. One can't make out everything from there. Did his version match yours?

WATSON. But for the central fact: his death. In his telling, he survived. The rest fit perfectly.

DR. EVANS. Sounds as though he was well acquainted with your account. Had he read it, do you think?

WATSON. He said as much.

DR. EVANS. Brave of him to admit it. But then, *He would* read about his own death, wouldn't he, being an egotist.

WATSON. Holmes an egotist?

DR. EVANS. If the patient is *he*. *Is he he?*

The Orderly enters.

ORDERLY. He's done squirming.

DR. EVANS. Good. (*To Watson.*) Well, doctor?

WATSON. I'd like to meet with the second patient before I commit myself.

DR. EVANS. But of course.

Dr. Evans nods to the Orderly.

The Orderly exits.

Shall I accompany you, or do you wish to go it alone?

WATSON. By all means, accompany me.

Lights change.

Scene 6—Holmes 2

The Orderly ushers in Holmes 2. Holmes 2 starts at seeing Watson.

HOLMES 2. Who is this?

DR. EVANS. You don't recognize the gentleman?

HOLMES 2. No.

DR. EVANS. He's a friend. His name is John.

HOLMES 2. ...Watson? No. Never. This isn't Watson. I've never set eyes on this person.

DR. EVANS. I can assure you of his identity.

HOLMES 2. I'll believe that when you can assure me of *yours*. Is there anything he can show to me attesting to this professed identity? Does he have a card?

Watson takes out card.

WATSON. Yes, I—

HOLMES 2. Proves nothing.

Watson takes out the telegram.

WATSON. This wire from Dr. Evans, addressed to me at my surgery—

HOLMES 2. That he could have stolen. Is there nothing *convincing* that he can offer up?

Watson takes out unopened letter.

WATSON. This is a letter from my late wife's cousins.

HOLMES 2. Late?

WATSON. Mary died.

Holmes 2 shows no reaction.

It arrived this morning as I was leaving, and in the hurry of events,

I neglected to open it. I wrote to them last week suggesting a walking tour.

Watson opens the envelope and holds out the letter for Holmes 2. Holmes 2 reads for a moment.

HOLMES 2. Where did you suggest these cousins join you on this walking tour?

WATSON. The Lake District.

HOLMES 2. Quite right. You're due there tomorrow.

WATSON. I will explain I am delayed.

DR. EVANS. (*To Holmes 2.*) Are you convinced now?

HOLMES 2. By no means. This person likely stole the letter wherein Watson proposed the tour of the Lake District, read its contents, resealed it, sent it off, and now he reasons, rightly as it happens, that this is their response. The odds were in his favor.

DR. EVANS. Rather a closed system, isn't it?

HOLMES 2. Nevertheless. I will speak with this person who claims to be John Watson. If we are left alone.

WATSON. That's perfectly fine. (*Re: straitjacket.*) Erm, must he wear the...?

HOLMES 2. (*Firmly.*) Oh, yes.

WATSON. Ah. Well, then.

Dr. Evans and the Orderly exit.

HOLMES 2. Have you met with those two imposters?

WATSON. One of them.

HOLMES 2. What was it you discussed?

WATSON. I asked him to describe the manner in which he eluded death at the hands of Professor Moriarty.

HOLMES 2. And what fiction did he ply you with? Some *deus ex machina* involving a heretofore unmentioned talent at an obscure and exotic form of gymnastics?

WATSON. He said Moriarty committed suicide.

HOLMES 2. Self-serving rot.

WATSON. Then *you* tell me. How did you survive Reichenbach?

Beat.

HOLMES 2. Do you know what I have always envied about John Watson? His courage. The physical bravery he exhibited on dozens of occasions, with me, in his military service. I do not have John Watson's courage.

WATSON. You're the most courageous man I ever knew.

HOLMES 2. I am heedless. I act without reflection. When Watson left me at the falls, I knew Moriarty would soon come for me.

Lights rise on—Reichenbach.

Moriarty's silhouette appears.

SFX: hissing and rushing water.

He came to the end of the path and stared into the abyss. If he turned he would see me. I had hid myself behind a boulder. From there I could observe Moriarty. The roar of the falls served to deaden my approach. No twig snapped underfoot, no pebble fell. He never knew I was behind him.

Moriarty suddenly turns front. He raises his cane to protect himself, then topples backwards.

Moriarty's silhouette vanishes.

SFX: Moriarty's echoing scream until it is overtaken by the falls rising to a deafening roar.

Lights down on Reichenbach.

SFX out.

He fell for a long time. Then he struck a rock, bounded off and disappeared into the water. I had murdered him.

WATSON. It was in defense. He was going to murder you.

HOLMES 2. Supposition. What proof is there of his intent?

WATSON. He attacked you, you struggled.

HOLMES 2. I pushed him, he fell.

WATSON. Holmes—

HOLMES 2. You are confusing me with the Holmes John Watson created! The Holmes he wrote about was heroic, willing to sacrifice himself to finish off his nemesis once and for all. A better man would have faced Moriarty, but I feared for my life and when I saw

my advantage I took it. I should have realized it wouldn't end with Moriarty's death. Before I had time to catch my breath, I saw a figure against the darkening sky: a witness! As I considered how to eliminate this witness to my crime, I realized I too had stepped into the abyss. I ran. I have been running since.

WATSON. ...But you came back.

HOLMES 2. Yes.

WATSON. Why?

HOLMES 2. My weakness.

Holmes 2 begins to cry.

WATSON. Holmes, here...

Watson reaches out to Holmes 2, but Holmes 2 shrinks from him, falling to his knees, sobbing.

Dr. Evans and the Orderly enter. Dr. Evans nods to the Orderly.

The Orderly helps the sobbing man to his feet and slowly leads Holmes 2 offstage.

Lights change.

Scene 7—A Message

Watson turns to Dr. Evans.

WATSON. He said it was his weakness.

DR. EVANS. Sorry?

WATSON. He said that he came back because of his weakness.

DR. EVANS. What did he mean?

WATSON. He didn't elaborate. Dr. Evans, upon examining the patient, did you find evidence of cocaine use?

DR. EVANS. Cocaine? No. Not in him, not in any of them.

The Matron enters with a message.

MATRON. Dr. Evans?

DR. EVANS. What is it, Matron?

MATRON. This was just received.

*The Matron gives Dr. Evans the message. Dr. Evans reads it.
He checks his watch, then pockets the message.*

Is there a reply?

DR. EVANS. No. Thank you, Matron, that will be all.

MATRON. Yes, doctor.

The Matron exits.

WATSON. Something?

DR. EVANS. Nothing that need concern you. Shall we meet the third man?

WATSON. Please.

*Dr. Evans presses the bell.
Lights change.*

Scene 8—Holmes 3

The Orderly ushers in Holmes 3 and positions him center.

DR. EVANS. Do you intend to pose this patient the same question you did to the others?

WATSON. Why do you ask?

DR. EVANS. It's just that, if you do, I'm afraid you'll receive no answers for your troubles. He's deaf.

WATSON. Deaf. Has anyone tested this hypothesis?

DR. EVANS. Get my medical dictionary.

The Orderly goes to the table and picks up the medical dictionary.

WATSON. I don't require a medical dictionary to prove whether this man is deaf or able to—

The Orderly holds the dictionary up behind Holmes 3's head.

*Dr. Evans steps out of Holmes 3's line of sight, takes a revolver from his pocket and fires into the medical dictionary: BANG!
Holmes 3 does not flinch.*

DR. EVANS. You see?

WATSON. You said you didn't keep a revolver!

DR. EVANS. This is *your* revolver.

Dr. Evans pockets the revolver.

The Orderly puts the medical dictionary back on the table.

He cannot hear, he cannot see, he does not speak.

WATSON. If the man doesn't speak how do you know he claims to be Holmes?

DR. EVANS. That I cannot reveal to you until you have made your identification.

WATSON. Why has his head been shaved?

DR. EVANS. I was looking for signs of an injury. A fall or a blow that might account for his current state. But I found nothing. Shall we leave you with him?

Watson stares at Holmes 3 for a moment.

WATSON. No.

DR. EVANS. Take him back.

The Orderly escorts Holmes 3 offstage.

Perhaps you'd like that sherry now.

WATSON. I would, yes.

Lights change.

Scene 9—Sherry

The Matron enters with a tray on which is a decanter of sherry and two glasses. She sets it on the table, then exits.

DR. EVANS. Mass delusion. The first that I've come upon. They say it's usually Napoleon.

Dr. Evans goes to the table and pours two glasses of sherry. As Dr. Evans does this—

Watson turns his back to him and to us and takes an unseen item from his breast pocket. He does something with it, then puts the item back.

On the day Napoleon's remains were returned to France for interment, a Paris hospital for the insane admitted fourteen men who claimed to be the Emperor. The mad identify with vivid personalities, figures of originality that impress themselves upon the popular imagination.

Watson turns just as Dr. Evans hands him his sherry.

WATSON. Do they never choose Robin Hood? King Arthur?

DR. EVANS. Lunatics tend to avoid models of health and happiness. Even in their delusions they are drawn to the melancholic.

WATSON. Poor Holmes.

DR. EVANS. Which?

WATSON. All of them.

Watson and Dr. Evans drink.

DR. EVANS. Well, Dr. Watson, now that you have met each patient, which of them is Mr. Sherlock Holmes?

WATSON. Dr. Evans, over the past three years, I have been required to perform this task on several occasions. Men claiming to be Holmes. Women claiming their husbands were Holmes. Neighbors convinced beyond certainty that the strange gentleman who took the attic room next door is without a doubt Sherlock Holmes. In each case, my judgment was made in an instant: "No."

DR. EVANS. If you had but once judged otherwise you wouldn't be here *now*.

WATSON. Tell me, are there patients in residence other than the three men you've shown me?

DR. EVANS. If you mean patients who claim to be Sherlock Holmes, no, of that I can assure you.

WATSON. Are there other patients at *all*?

DR. EVANS. *(After a beat.)* No.

WATSON. Then am I correct in my surmise that this asylum, as you call it, has been set up solely for the purpose of housing these three men?

DR. EVANS. It would be wrong to say that it has not.

WATSON. And if my judgment is that none of them is Sherlock Holmes, tell me what will happen.

DR. EVANS. You will be thanked for your service and returned to London at our expense. If you cannot satisfy us, what is owed you?

WATSON. You may assert nothing is owed to *me*, but I do owe something to my readers.

DR. EVANS. Your readers?

WATSON. Yes. The followers of Sherlock Holmes will be fascinated to learn of the interest you have taken in these three wretches.

DR. EVANS. You would write an account of this?

WATSON. I'd write a *story*. A secret asylum, mysterious telegrams sent and received—

DR. EVANS. What do you mean: "mysterious"?

WATSON. You received a wire earlier, didn't you?

DR. EVANS. *(Hesitates.)* Yes. The lighthouse was equipped with a telegraph set, so we kept it up.

WATSON. What was the message?

DR. EVANS. I am not authorized to inform you of its contents.

WATSON. As I say: "mysterious."

DR. EVANS. Here now, really—

WATSON. Dr. Evans, if I identify Sherlock Holmes, will he be free to come away from here, with me, back to London and Baker Street?

DR. EVANS. That I cannot reveal to you until—

WATSON. Doctor, if you refuse to answer one more time, I will be forced to keep from you the reason your first patient attacked me.

DR. EVANS. (*Reacts.*) Was it to *take* something, as I surmised?

WATSON. I will not tell you unless you yield. And that may prove dangerous, as the reason is pertinent to the situation in which we find ourselves.

SFX: rumble of thunder.

DR. EVANS. Right, then.

Dr. Evans puts down his empty glass with a hard clack.

It began with the woman.

Lights change.

Scene 10—The Woman

The Woman enters in a patient's uniform. Her hair is wild, her eyes wide, her cheeks flushed.

DR. EVANS. She was found on the moor in a storm a fortnight ago, delirious, running a high fever. She was taken to the poor hospital in Aberdeen. Her fever broke, the agitation calmed. But she did not respond to questions or other entreaties. She seemed to inhabit a deep catatonic state. At least that's how things stood when the Inspector arrived.

Lights change.

The Inspector enters. Tall, with mustache and sideburns, he wears a bowler hat and black overcoat.

INSPECTOR. Dr. Evans, I understand you have under your care a woman who was recently found on the moors.

DR. EVANS. His credentials were in order, confirming that he acted with the authority of Scotland Yard.

INSPECTOR. It is our hope that she will be able to give us assistance regarding the whereabouts of a document that has gone missing.

DR. EVANS. It was explained to the Inspector that the patient had been unresponsive to questions, that she had not spoken a word.

INSPECTOR. Do you know the reason for this?

DR. EVANS. The only possibility was that she had suffered a psychological trauma, a shock so violent that she willfully suppressed the memory of it. The only means to release it from her subliminal consciousness would be to put her in a hypnoid state.

INSPECTOR. A trance, you mean. Is there a risk?

DR. EVANS. It was explained that there is always risk.

INSPECTOR. Better that it be done here then, by a specialist, rather than some police physician roused from a drunken slumber.

DR. EVANS. And so it was.

The Inspector exits.

Lights change.

The Woman sits, isolated in a pool of light.

Do you know where you are?

WOMAN. I'm in hospital.

DR. EVANS. Do you know your name?

WOMAN. Yes.

DR. EVANS. What is your name?

WOMAN. I will not tell you.

DR. EVANS. Why?

WOMAN. It is dangerous to tell you my name.

DR. EVANS. For what reason?

WOMAN. For the same reason that I cannot tell you my name.

DR. EVANS. You were found on the moors. Do you know how you got there?

WOMAN. No.

DR. EVANS. Do you recall an illness?

WOMAN. I was not ill.

DR. EVANS. What, then?

WOMAN. I was murdered.

DR. EVANS. (*After a beat.*) Tell me how you came to be murdered.

Lights change.

The Woman's demeanor becomes less trance-like and more normal.

WOMAN. I had been living in Vienna.

The Woman stands.

The Client, in a white mask and black suit, enters.

A client approached me with a proposition. He wished to engage me to steal a document. The document was in the possession of a Signor Fonseca. Signor Fonseca had taken a house in Scotland for the weekend to host a ball. A fee was agreed upon, and I made my way there.

The Client exits.

When I arrived, the ball was in full swing. It was a masque.

The Woman puts on a mask.

Signor Fonseca, in a mask and white tie and tails, enters.

I had not been told the whereabouts of the document, so as Signor Fonseca entertained his guests, I climbed the stairs to the landing, and there I set a plumber's rocket afire. The house drafts carried the smoke in every direction.

SFX: cries of "FIRE!" "FIRE!"

When there is a fire, one always rushes to where one keeps what is most important. Which is what Signor Fonseca did.

Signor Fonseca comes downstage center, kneels, and mimes turning a safe's dial and opening it.

The Woman moves behind Signor Fonseca and mimes hitting him with a blackjack. He falls to the floor.

The Woman mimes taking the document from the safe.

In the confusion I made my way to the gates, where I had arranged to hand over the document and receive my payment.

The Client, in white mask and black suit, enters.

The Woman mimes handing him the document. He bows to her.

Then the Client grabs the Woman and covers her mouth with a handkerchief.

The Woman struggles for a moment, then goes limp in his arms.

The Client mimes holding a syringe and injecting something into the Woman's arm.

DR. EVANS. During her physical examination a small mark on her arm had been noted. A poison of some sort. But either her attacker was interrupted as he was administering it or he misapplied the dosage, for the woman survived.

The Client eases the Woman into the chair, then exits.

Lights change.

The Woman opens her eyes. She is again in the pool of light.

When she speaks, it is trance-like.

You said before that it would be dangerous were you to speak your name. Dangerous to you?

WOMAN. My life doesn't matter.

DR. EVANS. To someone else, then.

WOMAN. ...Yes.

DR. EVANS. Who? To whom would it be a danger if your name was known?

The Woman opens her mouth to speak. Her lip trembles. Her eyes fill with tears. She begins to sob. Her sobs become screams, her eyes wide, terrified.

Dr. Evans comforts the Woman until she calms.

Then the Woman exits.

Lights change.

The Inspector enters. He carries a newspaper.

INSPECTOR. Question her again.

DR. EVANS. She was, twice more.

INSPECTOR. Ask her to identify herself.

DR. EVANS. She refused again.

INSPECTOR. Press her to say her name.

DR. EVANS. It was explained: The patient's refusal is her sole means of protection.

INSPECTOR. The individual she is protecting is her accomplice. I have placed this item with several of the large circulation newspapers, as well as the Continental wire services.

The Inspector hands the newspaper to Dr. Evans.

The Inspector exits.

DR. EVANS. (*Reads.*) "Woman Discovered on Moor.' Unidentified female suspected of stealing an item of value during a conflagration caused by a smoke rocket..."

Watson reacts.

(*Reads.*) "...is to be moved to an asylum off the coast of Starkhaven where she will assist police in their enquiries."

WATSON. The Inspector was using her to bait a trap.

DR. EVANS. (*Nods.*) If her attacker hoped to learn of the woman's death, he would instead read that she was alive and ready to give him up to the police; having failed to kill her once, he would have no choice but to make a second and more successful attempt.

WATSON. Did the Inspector know the danger he was putting her in?

DR. EVANS. Oh, yes. He had already procured this place and sent staff ahead to create the appearance of an asylum. The rooms above were prepared and their doors replaced with iron bars. The Inspector and the woman were to arrive come evening, but that morning, as the staff was still sweeping out the cobwebs...

Lights change.

Scene 11—I Am Sherlock Holmes

Holmes 1 enters in a tweed overcoat and hat.

HOLMES 1. Good morning. My name is Sherlock Holmes.

DR. EVANS. He had chartered a small schooner to bring him to the island.

HOLMES 1. I wish to interrogate the woman you have as a patient here.

DR. EVANS. The gentleman was told he must give over any weapon he happened to carry. Found hidden on his person: a derringer pistol, a stiletto, a garotte, a quantity of strychnine, and a syringe. The gentleman was, with some effort, subdued and locked in one of the rooms above.

Holmes 1 exits.

Two hours later another boat arrived. It was a small shallop, stolen from the mainland, so porous that it broke up the moment it came up against the rocks.

Holmes 2 enters, in a shabby ensemble, agitated.

HOLMES 2. I'm Sherlock Holmes. I'm guilty of murder. Incarcerate me in this asylum at once or I take no responsibility for the mayhem I may do.

DR. EVANS. In consequence of his passionate oration, his wish was granted, and he was placed in the second room.

Holmes 2 exits.

The third was discovered at tea time.

WATSON. Discovered?

DR. EVANS. At the top, in the watch room under the old lantern.

Holmes 3 enters. Torn trousers, bare chest, barefoot. A note on a string is tied around his neck.

Don't know how long he'd been up there, or when or how he'd come ashore. He could not see, nor hear, nor speak. Around his neck was a note. It read: "I am Sherlock Holmes." He was placed inside the third room.

Holmes 3 exits.

Night had fallen. The Inspector arrived with the woman.

Lights change.

The Inspector and the Woman enter.

INSPECTOR. Sanctuary.

DR. EVANS. He was informed about the three men. It did not give him pause.

INSPECTOR. Come. It'll be dry above.

The Inspector ushers the Woman offstage.

DR. EVANS. A storm had come up.

Sound/lights: thunder, lightning.

The lights faltered.

Lights flicker.

Then failed.

Lights: blackout.

SFX: a gunshot: BANG!

Lights rise on—the Inspector in front of three barred cell doors.

The Inspector was found outside their rooms. Before he died he managed two words.

INSPECTOR. (*Rasps.*) ...Sherlock Holmes.

The Inspector dies.

Lights down on the Inspector.

DR. EVANS. It would have been simple enough for any one of them to reach between the bars, take the Inspector's revolver from him, and fire.

WATSON. It's one thing to take a gun away from someone. It's another entirely to take a gun you don't know is there.

DR. EVANS. Meaning?

WATSON. Meaning the Inspector must have been holding the gun before he was shot. May I examine it?

DR. EVANS. I fear the gun has not been found.

WATSON. What about the woman?

DR. EVANS. Gone.

WATSON. She escaped? How?

DR. EVANS. She took one of the skiffs.

WATSON. In a storm?

DR. EVANS. The skiff was found on the mainland, smashed against the rocks. There's been no sign of her since.

WATSON. And yet it's Holmes who is suspected of murder?

DR. EVANS. Given the Inspector's dying words, yes. That's why it was imperative the question of identity be answered as soon as could be done.

WATSON. So you contacted me.

DR. EVANS. Yes.

Takes out message.

As for the telegram that I received this evening, it was from Scotland Yard. A superintendent is on his way here tonight. When he arrives, he intends to arrest the man you identify as Sherlock Holmes for murder.

Dr. Evans hands the message to Watson.

Lights change.

Scene 12—Assassin

Watson reads the message, then gives it back.

DR. EVANS. Now you. What did the first patient take from you?

WATSON. Nothing.

DR. EVANS. Nothing? If this has been some sort of ruse to make me tell you—

Watson takes a slip of paper from his breast pocket.

WATSON. He didn't attack me so he could *take* something. He did it so he could slip this into my pocket.

Watson offers the slip to Dr. Evans. Dr. Evans takes it.

DR. EVANS. (*Reads.*) "Assassin."

WATSON. You would agree that it's rather suggestive. Not simply the word "assassin," but that he gave it to me surreptitiously.

DR. EVANS. Obviously he wanted to keep it a secret.

WATSON. From?

DR. EVANS. Me, the staff.

WATSON. Has he reason to?

DR. EVANS. Patients are often obsessively protective of the fictive personalities they have constructed. This one might consider my desire to cure his affliction akin to a murderous intent. In that sense, I suppose he could consider me an assassin. Shall we ask him?

WATSON. Not yet. When did the telegram from Scotland Yard say this superintendant would arrive?

DR. EVANS. No later than midnight.

WATSON. Within the hour. Then we have very little time. Doctor, would you ring for the Matron, please?

DR. EVANS. Certainly.

Dr. Evans rings the bell.

What is it you want her to do?

The Matron enters.

MATRON. Yes, doctor?

WATSON. Matron, would you go to the library, please, and see if you can find something for me?

MATRON. What's that, sir?

WATSON. A copy of the *Strand*.

MATRON. The magazine?

WATSON. The July issue, 1891.

The Matron looks at Dr. Evans. Dr. Evans sighs, but nods yes.

MATRON. I shall look, sir.

WATSON. And see if you can find a pair of binoculars that I might borrow.

MATRON. I will endeavor to do so.

The Matron exits.

DR. EVANS. What do you want with a three-year-old periodical?

WATSON. I must check something against my memory. Doctor, when I arrived, you said there is a music room here.

DR. EVANS. Yes. It's not been used for years, though. There's a piano, but I'm sure it's out of tune.

WATSON. Are there other instruments?

DR. EVANS. I haven't made an inventory.

WATSON. Might you have your Orderly make a search?

DR. EVANS. Now?

WATSON. At once.

DR. EVANS. (*Fumes.*) Is there a *particular* instrument we're to search for?

WATSON. A violin.

DR. EVANS. (*After a beat.*) He played, didn't he? The violin. I recall that from one of your stories.

WATSON. Yes, it's the sort of detail that tends to stick.

Dr. Evans nods, then exits.

Watson looks at the slip again.

The Matron enters.

MATRON. Dr. Watson?

WATSON. Yes?

MATRON. Is this the copy you wanted?

The Matron is holding the Strand magazine and a pair of binoculars. Watson takes the Strand.

WATSON. Yes, Matron, it is indeed.

MATRON. (*Hands him binoculars.*) And I found these binoculars.

WATSON. Thank you.

MATRON. You're welcome, sir.

WATSON. Oh, and Matron, you brought Dr. Evans a wire earlier this evening. Are you able to send a message requesting confirmation of that wire?

MATRON. To Scotland Yard?

WATSON. Yes, could you do that?

MATRON. Of course, sir.

The Matron exits.

Watson opens the Strand and turns the pages, looking for something.

Dr. Evans enters.

DR. EVANS. The search for a violin is underway.

WATSON. (*Preoccupied.*) Good.

DR. EVANS. Got your *Strand*, I see. Might I be so bold as to ask what it is you're checking for?

WATSON. Confirmation.

Watson stops turning pages. He has found what he was looking for. He reads for a moment, then sets the magazine aside.

The Inspector, you said he carried credentials. What was his name?

DR. EVANS. Patterson.

WATSON. (*After a beat.*) Patterson?

DR. EVANS. Chief Inspector Patterson. Why?

WATSON. Patterson was the inspector Holmes worked with to get the goods on Moriarty.

DR. EVANS. They knew each other?

WATSON. Holmes said they worked very closely.

DR. EVANS. Was he a *Chief* Inspector then?

WATSON. No. He must have been promoted after.

DR. EVANS. Even though Moriarty got away?

WATSON. Moriarty was dead, his gang was behind bars, the case was considered closed.

DR. EVANS. Rather a coincidence it being the *same* inspector. Although it does explain how he recognized Mr. Holmes as his killer.

WATSON. Why would Holmes kill the Inspector?

DR. EVANS. Patterson was supposed to arrest Moriarty, Moriarty got away, Patterson is promoted. That sort of thing would drive many a man to murder.

WATSON. Not the Holmes I know.

DR. EVANS. You haven't known him for years. How long is it since he disappeared? Three years? And before that, how long were the two of you separated? You had married, Holmes was living alone—

WATSON. What are you getting at?

DR. EVANS. Your knowledge of Sherlock Holmes is limited to a

very brief, very concentrated period marked by an abnormal level of violence and sensation. One could say your time with him acted as a stimulant, not unlike the narcotics Mr. Holmes favored. Deprived of his presence and its effects, it's possible that you have rewritten the man, crossing out the bad parts in order to leave a Sherlock Holmes who is better, finer, more honorable than he was in life. To admit otherwise would question your calling as tribune to the ideal, keeper of the flame. If Sherlock Holmes is not the hero you claim, what reason has John Watson for being?

WATSON. He cannot be the Holmes I knew *and* be a murderer!

DR. EVANS. Then there's only one other possibility.

WATSON. This is what you were hinting at when you warned me not to be alone with him, when you said he may no longer be the man I called friend. You think Holmes has gone mad.

DR. EVANS. I cannot make a diagnosis before I am told which patient it is I am supposed to treat.

The Orderly enters.

ORDERLY. Dr. Evans. I found this in a window seat.

The Orderly carries a violin case, dusty, dented, and scarred.

Watson takes it, opens it.

WATSON. It's empty.

DR. EVANS. Bad luck, that.

WATSON. Not necessarily. Have the patients brought in.

DR. EVANS. All three of them?

WATSON. Together.

DR. EVANS. That's very unwise.

WATSON. Dr. Evans, I insist.

Dr. Evans fumes. Then he nods to the Orderly.

The Orderly exits.

Watson closes the violin case.

Lights change.

Scene 13—Violins

*The Orderly ushers in Holmes 1, Holmes 2, and Holmes 3.
He sits Holmes 3 on the chair.*

WATSON. You may go.

*The Orderly hesitates, looks at Dr. Evans. Dr. Evans nods.
The Orderly exits.*

This is the first opportunity the three of you have had to be together, isn't it? Must be jarring, the sight of two others laying claim to one's identity.

HOLMES 1. Not in the least.

HOLMES 2. Yes, these two are pretenders.

HOLMES 1. By the way, Watson, I must apologize for my behavior earlier. My physical outburst. I beg your forgiveness.

WATSON. No harm done. In fact, I wondered if the uncharacteristic violence you exhibited might be due to your having no opportunity to use up your excess energies. Are you allowed nothing in the way of exercise?

HOLMES 1. I have been denied even a pipe and tobacco.

HOLMES 2. The flame is the danger.

WATSON. Well, I can't offer you a smoke, but I do have something that I hope will be of pleasure to you.

Watson holds up the violin case.

Your violin. I brought it from Baker Street. As you know, it is a—

HOLMES 2. It is a Stradivarius which I acquired from—

HOLMES 1. From a broker in Tottenham Court Road for fifty-five shillings. Let's not be tiresome. It's kind of you to remember, Watson. Of course, I'm not very good.

WATSON. That never mattered before. Which of you would like to play it first?

HOLMES 2. *(After a beat.)* This is a test.

HOLMES 1. Of course it's a test. Shall we three line-up and resin our bows, eager to take on Mendelssohn's *Lieder*?

WATSON. Mendelssohn's *Lieder* was one of your favorites.

HOLMES 2. It still is.

HOLMES 1. Rather too sentimental given the situation.

WATSON. Choose something else, then.

HOLMES 1. I am not a carnival monkey. *(Re: Holmes 2.)* I'm sure *this* one will happily oblige.

HOLMES 2. I would but for my restraints.

WATSON. Surely the straitjacket isn't necessary.

DR. EVANS. It is not at my insistence.

HOLMES 2. I have killed with my hands.

WATSON. My. You've developed the skills of a trained assassin.

Holmes 1 and Holmes 2 react.

HOLMES 1. That was said in order to make us react *how*?

WATSON. Pretty much as you did.

Watson takes out the slip.

HOLMES 2. What's that?

WATSON. Something that was given to me this evening.

Watson holds up the slip for Holmes 2 to read.

HOLMES 2. *(Reads.)* "Assassin." Who gave you this?

WATSON. *(Re: Holmes 1.)* This gentleman.

HOLMES 1. I?

WATSON. Slipped it into my pocket with such dexterous finger work he really *should* play the violin.

DR. EVANS. Do you deny it?

HOLMES 1. Most emphatically.

WATSON. Do you deny that you attacked me?

HOLMES 1. Deny it? Ha! I gave you a thrashing. But it wasn't so I could slip you *that*.

DR. EVANS. Then why did you?

HOLMES 1. I asked Watson if he'd brought his revolver. He said

that you'd taken it. I gave him a tumble so I could make sure. Why would I give him a piece of paper that says "Assassin"?

WATSON. Perhaps it's your calling card.

Holmes 1 goes very cold.

Watson looks at Dr. Evans.

Or perhaps you meant it as an accusation.

Dr. Evans stiffens.

Watson looks at Holmes 2.

Or as a warning.

Holmes 2 seethes.

One or more of you has gone to a great deal of trouble to research the Holmes casebook. I should be grateful, as that means many more copies of the *Strand* have been sold.

HOLMES 2. I have never turned a page of Watson's stories.

HOLMES 1. However could you, what with your "restraints"?

WATSON. The trick isn't in comparing what you say to what's been published. The trick is what came after.

HOLMES 1. After?

WATSON. After we were separated at Reichenbach. The stories you tell are so dramatically different.

HOLMES 2. Are they really?

HOLMES 1. (*Mocking.*) "Are they really?" When did you know me to talk like that?

HOLMES 2. Like what?

HOLMES 1. Like a woman.

HOLMES 2. Just how are our stories different?

WATSON. (*Re: Holmes 1.*) Well, this gentleman says Moriarty committed suicide at Reichenbach. Rushed right past him into the abyss without a word.

HOLMES 2. (*Laughs.*) Nonsense!

WATSON. What, that Moriarty would kill himself?

HOLMES 2. That he would do so "without a word." Never did a more loquacious maniac prowl the earth.

WATSON. A good point, but to be fair, Moriarty isn't very talkative in *your* version either.

HOLMES 1. Oh? What is his version?

WATSON. (*Re: Holmes 2.*) This gentleman says that he observed Moriarty standing at the end of the path, then crept from his hiding place and pushed the professor to his death.

HOLMES 1. (*Derisive snort.*) Impossible!

WATSON. Why so?

HOLMES 1. He observed Moriarty from "his hiding place"?

HOLMES 2. From behind a boulder.

HOLMES 1. Which boulder was this?

HOLMES 2. The one on the path.

HOLMES 1. There is no boulder on the path. Nor are there crevices. Or recesses. Or holes to hide in. The cliff walls are sheer, glistening rock.

Holmes 2, in a fury now, lunges at Holmes 1. They fall against the table, causing the medical dictionary to fall to the floor with a loud thud.

Holmes 3 does not react.

Watson looks at Holmes 3.

DR. EVANS. I told you the three of them shouldn't have been brought together!

The Matron enters.

WATSON. Yes. You were right. I apologize. Take them back, please, would you, doctor?

DR. EVANS. Right, all of you, go along.

The Matron reaches to put her hand on Holmes 3's shoulder when Watson firmly stops her.

WATSON. Except for Patient Three.

Beat.

Dr. Evans nods.

The Matron ushers Holmes 1 and Holmes 2 offstage.

Lights change.

Scene 14—An Idea

Watson picks up the medical dictionary and puts it back on the table.

WATSON. Doctor, when you spoke about the woman's condition, you said she had suffered a psychological trauma so violent that she suppressed the memory of it. But the memories were unearthed by putting her under a hypnotic trance.

DR. EVANS. Most of them, at any rate.

WATSON. If that worked with the woman, might it not work with Patient Three?

DR. EVANS. It would first require that the patient be able to see, hear, and speak.

WATSON. But what if he *can*? If the impairment isn't physical, then it must be that he can see and hear and speak, he simply *behaves* as though he can't.

DR. EVANS. He *believes* that he can't. There's a difference. His mind does not comprehend what his senses take in.

WATSON. What about on a subconscious or unconscious level?

DR. EVANS. Possibly, but—

WATSON. Then couldn't you put him into a hypnoid trance, without his conscious mind even knowing? It's worth a try, isn't it?

Dr. Evans considers. Finally, he takes out his pocket watch.

Lights change.

Holmes 3 is in a pool of light.

Dr. Evans holds his watch in front of Holmes 3.

DR. EVANS. This is my watch. You cannot see it, but you comprehend it withal. Its shape, its size and brightness. You cannot hear my voice, but you perceive it withal. You cannot speak, but I am going to ask you questions, and when I ask, you will answer. What is your name?

HOLMES 3. Sherlock Holmes.

Dr. Evans and Watson exchange a glance.

DR. EVANS. Mr. Holmes, did you and Dr. Watson travel to Switzerland three years ago?

HOLMES 3. No.

Dr. Evans and Watson react.

We traveled to Switzerland two years and eight months ago.

DR. EVANS. Yes, my mistake. Do you recall what happened to you two years and eight months ago? In Switzerland? At the Falls at Reichenbach?

Lights change.

Scene 15—Holmes 3: The Bargain

Lights rise on—Reichenbach.

SFX: hissing and rushing water.

Moriarty's silhouette appears, backlit by mist. He turns to face Holmes 3. For the first time, we see Moriarty's face.

MORIARTY. Mr. Holmes.

Holmes 3 stands. His demeanor changes to that of the Sherlock Holmes of memory.

HOLMES 3. Professor. Your ruse to separate Dr. Watson from me was rather obvious.

MORIARTY. It worked.

HOLMES 3. Only because I allowed it to. Would you give me a moment to write a short message to him? Regardless the outcome of our discussion, he deserves an explanation.

MORIARTY. You might wish to wait until our discussion is ended.

HOLMES 3. Tell me what you mean.

MORIARTY. I'm a mathematician, Mr. Holmes. My activities in the criminal realm owe their success to my estimation of probable outcomes. The outcomes of this situation are very few.

HOLMES 3. Six, actually.

MORIARTY. Quite right. Those being?

HOLMES 3. I die, you die, we both die. That's three. I die and you are horribly crippled for what remains of your life. That's four. Vice versa. That's five. Lightning strikes and we forget our prior animosity. That is six.

MORIARTY. I choose lightning.

HOLMES 3. Explain yourself.

MORIARTY. At this moment in a room in a house in a country far from here, there is a woman. From your past.

Holmes 3 reacts.

I see from your reaction that I need not say her name.

HOLMES 3. I'd prefer you not sully it.

MORIARTY. I know where she lives, what she does, who cares for her, and for whom she cares. Mr. Holmes, if you alone survive our encounter here, the woman will die within the hour.

HOLMES 3. You have shown me no proof.

Moriarty swings his cane up to point its tip at Holmes 3. Impaled on it is a photograph.

MORIARTY. The photograph was taken just yesterday.

Holmes 3 plucks the photograph from the cane and examines it.

The woman is not aware that she is under surveillance. She abides in blissful ignorance of the mortal danger in which I have placed her. You see now that it is her?

HOLMES 3. Yes.

MORIARTY. And you will do as I say?

HOLMES 3. Is it to kill myself, throw myself over the edge?

MORIARTY. It is to leave me alone. Forever. Give me your word, and the woman shall live.

HOLMES 3. How can I leave you alone? The world knows you're on the run. Even if I don't continue my pursuit of you, every policeman in Europe will take up the chase.

MORIARTY. No one will search for a dead man. Nor will a dead man search.

HOLMES 3. This is why you suggested we spoke *before* I wrote to Watson.

MORIARTY. The story will be that you and I met upon this path. We struggled, we fell, we died.

Removes his top hat.

The two of us shall leave behind a few personal items to create a trail of evidence for Dr. Watson to follow.

Sets down top hat.

I'm sure he will fill in the rest. I shall wait whilst you write your false testament to him.

Moriarty moves to his previous position.

SFX: roar of waterfall increases.

Lights change.

HOLMES 3. I took my notebook from my pocket. The bargain Moriarty had put before me was a devil's bargain. I could not accept it. But I had listened closely to his words. The woman would be killed if I alone survived our encounter. To save her, both Moriarty and I must die. Or at least *appear to*. (*To Moriarty.*) I cannot yield to your demands.

Moriarty turns. He stares at Holmes 3 for a beat.

MORIARTY. Is your decision final?

HOLMES 3. Kill me or die.

Sudden light change—Moriarty is in silhouette.

I have some knowledge of *baritsu*, the Japanese system of wrestling, and as we both went over the edge, I slipped through his grip.

Lights down on Moriarty.

SFX: Moriarty's echoing scream until it is overtaken by the roar of the falls.

Lights down on Reichenbach.

SFX: roar of the falls fades.

Lights change.

I landed on a small ledge below. The professor fell for a long way. Then he struck a rock, bounded off, and disappeared into the water. Moriarty was dead. I had now to elude his accomplices.

WATSON. Accomplices?

Dr. Evans shushes Watson.

DR. EVANS. What accomplices do you mean?

HOLMES 3. Moriarty said if I did not give up my pursuit of him, the woman would be killed within the hour. The woman resided in another country. To make good on his threat would require a rapid relay of communications, ending where the victim resided and beginning at Reichenbach, meaning that Moriarty and I were being observed by someone whose job it was to convey the order to the killer. I had done everything I could to see to it that Moriarty's order was not carried out, but I had to make certain. I began my search for the woman that night.

DR. EVANS. And did you find her?

HOLMES 3. It took nearly three years to discover she was in Vienna, but when I reached the city I found that she had left suddenly. Soon after I learned she was in danger.

DR. EVANS. Learned how?

HOLMES 3. A news despatch. A woman in Scotland had stolen an item of value during a conflagration caused by a smoke rocket.

Watson and Dr. Evans exchange a look.

They were using her as bait to lure me back to England.

DR. EVANS. You knew it was a trap?

HOLMES 3. Yes.

DR. EVANS. Yet you came back?

HOLMES 3. I had no choice.

DR. EVANS. What is this woman's name?

HOLMES 3. The...

Beat.

She...

Beat, demeanor changes.

She is the woman.

DR. EVANS. Mr. Holmes?

Holmes 3's eyes dull. His expression returns to its previous impassivity.

Dr. Evans moves to Holmes 3. He moves his hand close in

front of Holmes 3's eyes. Holmes 3 does not blink.

Dr. Evans turns to Watson.

He's gone back inside himself.

Dr. Evans rings/buzzes.

The Matron enters.

Matron, take the patient back.

MATRON. Yes, doctor.

The Matron ushers Holmes 3 offstage.

Lights change.

Scene 16 Watson Explains

Watson and Dr. Evans are alone.

DR. EVANS. He refused to answer, just as she did. It's as though the two of them had made a pact.

WATSON. Quite so.

DR. EVANS. Why go to such lengths to conceal her name?

WATSON. Her name is Irene Adler. She is indeed Sherlock Holmes' one weakness. Only a threat to Miss Adler's life could have made him come out of hiding after all this time.

DR. EVANS. How could Holmes tell the woman in that news story and this Miss Adler were one and the same?

WATSON. Method, Dr. Evans. Read this.

Watson gives the Strand to Dr. Evans.

The Strand, July 1891 issue.

DR. EVANS. (*Reads.*) "A Scandal in Bohemia." One of your stories?

WATSON. It tells of Holmes' sole encounter with her. The relevant passage is there.

DR. EVANS. (*Reads.*) "Holmes raised his hand, and with a cry of fire I tossed the smoke rocket."

WATSON. It was Holmes' method for catching Miss Adler. Miss Adler lifted the method from Holmes in order to steal that document. Now recall what the Inspector pressed you to discover from the woman.

DR. EVANS. He wanted her to say her name.

WATSON. He wanted her to say "Irene Adler" so that he could put her name in that news item. It was intended to alert Sherlock Holmes to the fact that Miss Adler's life was in imminent danger, but as she refused to utter it aloud, the Inspector was forced to resort to other means.

DR. EVANS. Are you saying Inspector Patterson was in the pay of Moriarty?

WATSON. It certainly explains the ease with which the professor

eluded capture in London three years ago. It also explains why the Inspector appeared at the hospital knowing so much about the woman.

DR. EVANS. Then Moriarty had three accomplices: Inspector Patterson in London, another in Reichenbach to relay the order to kill Miss Adler, and a third to carry out that order.

WATSON. When the three of them got wind that Holmes was alive, they engaged Miss Adler in Vienna, planted that document in Scotland, then attacked the poor woman and left her to be found on the moor. Likely the poison was diluted just enough to leave her in that damaged state. Yet she knew in her subconscious mind that if she revealed her identity it meant mortal danger to Sherlock Holmes. That's why the Inspector resorted to using the phrase "smoke rocket," counting on Holmes to associate it with Miss Adler.

DR. EVANS. But Holmes knew it was a trap, he said as much.

WATSON. Which is why he devised a trap of his own to confound his would-be assassins. He employed two imposters. I'll wager he secured their services long before he had need of them, paid them well for the dangers they would face, and swore them not to waver in the pretense that they were Sherlock Holmes.

DR. EVANS. Lord. But why hasn't the real Holmes told the truth?

WATSON. He *has* told the truth. He's said that he is Sherlock Holmes.

DR. EVANS. But so have the others! Why won't Holmes order them to stop?

WATSON. Because he can't let down his guard. The moment he steps forward he becomes a target.

DR. EVANS. Then tell me. You've had more than ample time to make your judgment. I can't for a moment believe John Watson isn't able to recognize his best friend in the world.

WATSON. Of course I recognize him. I recognized Holmes the moment I saw him. But I needed to discover what all this was about.

DR. EVANS. Identify him *now* then!

WATSON. Not before I clear his name. I won't send the best and wisest man I have ever known to the gallows. Dr. Evans, I would very much like to trust you, but I can't yet eliminate the possibility that *you* could be one of the assassins.

The Matron enters.

MATRON. Dr. Watson? The reply to the wire you sent.

The Matron hands Watson a message. She exits. Watson reads.

DR. EVANS. Here, what do you mean I could be one of the assassins?

WATSON. The first assassin was the Inspector, shot dead here two nights ago. As to the second, the wire I had the Matron send was to Scotland Yard, requesting confirmation of the message you received earlier. This is their reply.

Watson hands the message to Dr. Evans.

DR. EVANS. *(Reads.)* "No superintendant en route to you. No previous wire sent."

WATSON. The second assassin, in the guise of a police superintendent. *(Checks watch.)* And he should arrive in mere minutes. Dr. Evans, give me my revolver.

DR. EVANS. Your...?

WATSON. My gun, please. Doctor, we are dealing with vicious and resourceful killers, now give me my gun, we do not have time!

Dr. Evans hesitates. Then he takes the revolver from his pocket and gives it to Watson.

Thank you.

DR. EVANS. That should prove I'm not an assassin. Would an assassin hand over the one revolver on the premises?

WATSON. If you're clever, I'm sure you have another. You said before that there's a skiff on the island.

DR. EVANS. It's tied up under the dock where the ferry brought you.

WATSON. How many will she take?

DR. EVANS. Six or thereabouts.

WATSON. Have the Orderly bring the skiff round to the other side of the island, where it won't be seen by a boat approaching the dock.

DR. EVANS. And then?

WATSON. Bring the patients from their rooms.

Dr. Evans nods, starts off, stops.

DR. EVANS. Watson. *Have you a plan?*

WATSON. I do. It's even a good one.

Dr. Evans exits.

Watson checks his revolver as we hear:

SFX: three cells open.

Lights change.

Scene 17—Theory of the Case

Dr. Evans enters with Holmes 1, Holmes 2, and Holmes 3.

HOLMES 1. Watson, what's going on?

HOLMES 2. There's something wrong, isn't there?

HOLMES 1. Of course there's something wrong, don't be a fool!

HOLMES 2. I insist that you—

WATSON. Gentlemen, please. Before we can go one step further, I wish to clear up a misconception.

Watson picks up the medical dictionary, holds it up in the air behind Holmes 3, and drops it to the floor with a loud thud.

Holmes 3 does not react.

That's the second time. He didn't react. He didn't react before, either, when the dictionary fell to the floor.

HOLMES 1. He's deaf.

WATSON. Even a person who cannot hear *can* feel the vibration of something heavy hitting the floor. It's the fraud who makes the mistake of thinking it's more convincing *not* to react.

Holmes 3 doesn't seem to hear. Finally he turns and looks at Watson.

HOLMES 3. Well done.

DR. EVANS. He was pretending this whole time? Why?

WATSON. A red herring to throw us off the scent.

HOLMES 3. And you think you're on to it now, do you?

WATSON. Getting there.

HOLMES 1. What the devil are you talking about?

WATSON. This is just conjecture, mind you, but it explains why this little trio has been running us round in circles. It fits neatly with what happened the night the Inspector was murdered.

Lights change.

Scene 18—Madhouse

The Inspector and the Woman enter.

WATSON. The Inspector accompanied the woman to the island.

INSPECTOR. Sanctuary. Come. It'll be dry above.

The Inspector ushers the Woman offstage.

WATSON. He ushered her to the corridor where the three of you were kept locked.

Lights rise on—the corridor and three cell doors.

Holmes 1, Holmes 2, and Holmes 3 get in position inside the cells.

The Inspector and the Woman enter.

The storm raged.

SFX/lights: thunder, lightning.

The lights faltered.

Lights flicker.

Then failed.

Lights out.

A shaft of moonlight illuminates.

The Inspector takes out a revolver. He takes out a key and mimes unlocking each cell.

SFX: key in lock. Door 1 creaks open. Key in lock. Door 2 creaks open. Key in lock. Door 3 creaks open.

The Inspector moves behind the Woman and points the revolver.

INSPECTOR. Mr. Holmes.

The Woman reacts.

Miss Adler is here.

The Woman reacts.

Come out, Mr. Holmes. Come out or I will kill her.

Holmes 2 comes into the light.

The Inspector is about to shoot Holmes 2 when—

Holmes 1 comes into the light.

The Inspector turns the gun on Holmes 1 when—

Holmes 3 comes into the light.

(*Admiring.*) Well. Well. And well. Please step forward, Mr. Holmes. Now, please, or I will—

The Inspector starts to raise the revolver to the Woman's head.

The Woman pulls away, takes the revolver from the Inspector and shoots him. BANG!

The Woman runs offstage with the gun.

(*Rasps.*) ...Sherlock Holmes.

Lights down on the Inspector.

Scene 19—Escape

Watson faces Holmes 1, Holmes 2, Holmes 3, and Dr. Evans.

WATSON. Holmes didn't kill the Inspector, but he has been protecting she who did. Just as she protected him. That's why Holmes devised this puzzle, to make us chase our tails and give the woman time to get away to safety.

HOLMES 3. She didn't shoot Inspector Patterson.

WATSON. What fact contradicts it?

HOLMES 1. The Inspector's dying words.

HOLMES 2. He said "Sherlock Holmes."

HOLMES 3. If I didn't kill Patterson, why did he say I did?

WATSON. To make certain Sherlock Holmes hanged. Patterson was one of Moriarty's gang. He'd sworn to see you dead.

Watson picks up the binoculars and peers through them out front.

You each say you're the real Sherlock Holmes? Well, whichever of you is telling the truth, your assassin will arrive in just minutes.

HOLMES 3. Assassin?

WATSON. (*Peers through binoculars.*) A boat is just approaching the dock.

HOLMES 1. What boat?

HOLMES 2. Is it the ferry?

WATSON. No. A private vessel.

Lowers binoculars.

And it has just put out its running lights.

HOLMES 3. What do you intend to do?

WATSON. Get us off this island.

HOLMES 2. How?

HOLMES 1. Don't panic quite so quickly. This is another test, isn't it, Watson?

HOLMES 2. (*To Dr. Evans.*) Is it, doctor?

DR. EVANS. I fear not.

HOLMES 2. (*To Holmes 1.*) You see?

The Orderly and the Matron enter.

MATRON. The skiff is tied up a hundred paces from the kitchen door.

HOLMES 2. Skiff? Here now—

WATSON. (*To Orderly.*) Escort the first patient to the skiff. Remain with him there.

ORDERLY. Yes, sir.

HOLMES 1. Watson, you're so suddenly commanding. How very unlike you.

The Orderly escorts Holmes 1 offstage.

WATSON. Dr. Evans, you and the Matron will take the next patient.

DR. EVANS. What about you?

WATSON. I need two minutes alone with the last of them. If I do not come out at the end of those two minutes, with or without him, set off at once for the mainland.

DR. EVANS. What if the last patient comes out without you?

WATSON. Then set off sooner. Take the next patient.

HOLMES 2. Thank God!

The Matron and Dr. Evans move to Holmes 2. Watson stops them.

WATSON. Oh, I am sorry. The next patient isn't the *second* patient. The next patient to go is the third patient.

HOLMES 2. The *third*?

HOLMES 3. What?

HOLMES 2. Here, why are you taking him before me?

HOLMES 3. Watson, what are you up to?

WATSON. Doctor, go!

DR. EVANS. Come along.

Dr. Evans and the Matron take Holmes 3 offstage.

Lights change.

Scene 20—The Real Holmes

Watson takes out his watch.

HOLMES 2. ...What are we doing?

WATSON. Waiting for two minutes to pass.

HOLMES 2. Why?

Watson opens the watch, looks at it.

WATSON. Because that's how long it will take.

HOLMES 2. You said we were to join them.

WATSON. We're not.

HOLMES 2. But the boat that's arriving now—

WATSON. There is no boat.

HOLMES 2. The telegram said—

WATSON. *I sent that telegram.*

HOLMES 2. You?

WATSON. From the train station. I sent it just before I made the ferry crossing.

HOLMES 2. Why?

WATSON. To make Dr. Evans believe a superintendent from Scotland Yard was on his way here. Then I had the Matron send a wire requesting confirmation of his arrival. Naturally, Scotland Yard replied that no such superintendent had been sent.

HOLMES 2. You tricked Dr. Evans. For what reason?

WATSON. So that he would come to the conclusion I wished him to.

HOLMES 2. That an assassin was about to arrive.

WATSON. (*Nods.*) And to speed the moment of truth.

HOLMES 2. The truth?

WATSON. That you are the real Sherlock Holmes.

Holmes 2's demeanor changes. His anxiety vanishes as he becomes the crisp, authoritative Sherlock Holmes we know.

HOLMES 2. What was it that finally convinced you?

WATSON. I was convinced from the start.

HOLMES 2. Oh?

WATSON. When you didn't recognize me. The others accepted without question that I was Dr. Watson. But not you. And now...

Checks watch, closes it.

...the skiff is gone.

HOLMES 2. ...Watson.

WATSON. Oh, I've barely set eyes on John Watson. Just glimpsed him. From afar, as it were. I *have* made a *study* of him, a very complete one. Dr. Watson left London yesterday, for the Lake District. The moment he departed, I broke into his surgery.

Watson picks up the journal.

(*Reads.*) "From the Journal of Dr. John H. Watson, M.D. Of the many unforeseen outcomes of the tragedy that befell Sherlock Holmes at the Falls of Reichenbach..."

Holds up telegram.

It was then the telegram arrived. "I have in my care three men who claim to be Sherlock Holmes."

Puts telegram in journal.

This all might have ended much sooner had Dr. Evans not confiscated my revolver upon my arrival. I had to devise a plan to retrieve it.

The first patient did come at me so he could discover if I carried another weapon, but I took advantage of his attack and improvised. Whilst Dr. Evans was busy pouring me a sherry, I took out a slip of paper and wrote the word "assassin." All to put poor Dr. Evans in such a state of panic that he would have no choice but to return my revolver.

HOLMES 2. You're the assassin.

WATSON. The pleasure I take in killing you is matched only by the reward I shall receive for it. Fifty thousand pounds deposited in a Swiss bank by Professor Moriarty. It was not paid out following the events at Reichenbach as the professor's instructions stipulated that your corpse be identified. This time I shall make certain your remains remain. It has been a long wait, but there is the consolation of compounded interest. If Inspector Patterson had succeeded the money would have gone to him, but as he failed, it goes to me, as does the honor of exacting vengeance.

HOLMES 2. And if *you* fail?

WATSON. Then the third of us would finish the job. Colonel Sebastian Moran. But there will be no need for Colonel Moran's services.

Holmes 2 reverts to his previous persona: anxious, frightened.

HOLMES 2. But I'm not Sherlock Holmes! I was only *hired* to *pretend* to be him!

WATSON. I commend you on your performance, Mr. Holmes. In fact I'd shake your hand, but you did insist so on the restraints.

Watson fires twice: BANG! BANG!

Holmes 2 staggers back a few steps and sways for a moment. Then, in one motion, he disengages the straps and the strait-jacket falls away, revealing that he is holding a revolver.

HOLMES 2. It's actually not such a restraint after all.

Watson fires twice: BANG! BANG!

Holmes 2 fires: BANG!

Watson is hit in the arm and drops his revolver.

Holmes 1 and Holmes 3 enter, both holding revolvers.

Dr. Evans enters with a revolver.

DR. EVANS. You were right. If I were clever I would have another.

Watson stares at them helplessly. He points to his revolver.

WATSON. The bullets...! You fired a bullet into that dictionary!

DR. EVANS. Yes, it was important that you believed the revolver had live rounds in it. So: one *live* round to shoot the dictionary. The rest: blanks. (*Calls offstage.*) Matron?

The Matron enters with a photograph.

This was taken an hour ago. I'm sure you recall the moment.

WATSON. When she took the photograph of them?

DR. EVANS. She didn't take a photograph of the *patients*. She took a photograph of *you*.

The Matron shows the photograph to Watson.

This will go to the mainland, where we expect you to be identified from it as the gentleman whose document was stolen that fateful night. Signor Fonseca.

The Orderly enters.

From this point on, "Watson" is known by his real name: Fonseca.

FONSECA. You mean all this was...?

DR. EVANS. A ruse. But a ruse I think Dr. Evans would approve.

FONSECA. Aren't *you*...?

DR. EVANS. Evans? Oh, no. I *am* a doctor. My name is John Watson.

From this point on, "Dr. Evans" is known by his real name: John Watson.

JOHN WATSON. Dr. Evans is on holiday at present. A walking tour of the Lake District.

FONSECA. Then the real Holmes is...?

HOLMES 1. Not I.

HOLMES 2. Nor I.

HOLMES 3. Not even me.

FONSECA. *Is he dead, then?*

ORDERLY. By no means.

As the Orderly speaks, he removes his false whiskers, wig and putty nose. From this point on the "Orderly" is known by his real name: Sherlock Holmes.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. I am alive and well and laboring under no falsities save my theatrical trappings.

FONSECA. You?

SHERLOCK HOLMES. I did employ impersonators. Not two as you surmised. Three. Three Holmeses to confuse the Inspector long enough to free Miss Adler. But when she fired that revolver I knew I'd again underestimated the woman's instinct for survival. With Patterson dead, you planned your next move.

JOHN WATSON. That was when I noticed someone was watching my surgery.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. Watson alerted my brother Mycroft, and we devised the charade by which Watson would appear to leave London, thus allowing you the opportunity to break into his surgery just before that telegram was delivered summoning him here.

FONSECA. Who are these impersonators then?

HOLMES 1. (*At attention.*) Captain Magnus Sherrinford, Her Majesty's Royal Navy.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. Captain Sherrinford was personally selected by Mycroft who mistook him for me not once but twice and in broad daylight. My second, somewhat-agitated doppelganger is in actuality...

HOLMES 2. (*Bows.*) Archibald Valentine.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. Mr. Valentine, you will not be surprised to learn, is an actor.

HOLMES 2. Mr. Holmes saw me perform a double bill of *Oedipus Rex* and *Puss in Boots*.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. Not on the West End, of course.

HOLMES 2. No, it was a provincial theater, but the notices were more than respectable / really—

SHERLOCK HOLMES. / And last...

HOLMES 3. Claude D'Entremont. Sherlock and I are, erm...

SHERLOCK HOLMES. Cousins.

HOLMES 3. *Oui, nous sommes cousines.*

SHERLOCK HOLMES. Once removed.

HOLMES 3. (*Corrects him.*) *Deux fois enlevé.* (*To Fonseca.*) Two times.

FONSECA. Was there a large pool to choose from?

HOLMES 1. Men suited to the portrayal of and willing to pretend to be Sherlock Holmes?

HOLMES 2. Enjoined not to yield until the moment of truth, no matter how risky?

HOLMES 3. *Et dangereux?*

SHERLOCK HOLMES. Fewer than you might think. Now that you have identified the remaining member of Moriarty's charming society as Colonel Moran, we shall set a trap for him in London. The police cutter should be arriving momentarily. Escort Signor Fonseca to the dock, will you?

FONSECA. Mr. Holmes, there is one last service I must carry out on behalf of my master. If bested by you, the professor charged us to relay his sincere albeit regretful compliments.

The Matron, Holmes 1, Holmes 2, and Holmes 3 escort Fonseca offstage.

Lights change.

Scene 21—Holmes and Watson

John Watson pours sherry for both of them.

JOHN WATSON. He was strangely like me, wasn't he? The false Watson.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. How so?

JOHN WATSON. Cool, daring, quick-witted.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. And then some.

JOHN WATSON. About Miss Adler. Why didn't she stay?

SHERLOCK HOLMES. Pardon me?

JOHN WATSON. You came out of hiding and made yourself a target in order to rescue her. Then she shoots the Inspector and runs off, leaving you holding the bag. What does that make you think?

SHERLOCK HOLMES. That I succeeded in my task. Watson, she shot the Inspector *to save me*.

JOHN WATSON. How do you know?

SHERLOCK HOLMES. I am a detective.

JOHN WATSON. You wouldn't be so cavalier had she been someone else.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. Who else do you mean?

Sherlock Holmes looks at Watson.

Watson looks away, his feelings hurt.

What, you?

JOHN WATSON. I took on not some little danger too. That Fonseca fellow was wearing my favorite suit. It's likely ruined now. And I shaved my mustache. Take weeks to grow it back to its former glory. Miss Adler didn't have to shave a thing.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. My dear Watson, if Moriarty's gang had used you to entice me back to England, I promise you, I would be just as cavalier.

JOHN WATSON. Thank you, Holmes.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. Not at all, Watson. One thing, though. When you set down your account of my return to life, I must implore you not to record this adventure.

JOHN WATSON. But it's a good one.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. It is not for my sake I ask, but for hers.

JOHN WATSON. Ah. Yes. Well, then, I promise you, Holmes, I will not put Miss Adler into my account.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. Thank you.

JOHN WATSON. I'll have to make up something, though.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. Have you never done that before?

JOHN WATSON. Certainly not.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. What will you write?

JOHN WATSON. A story.

John Watson exits.

The Matron enters in traveling clothes, carrying a small case. She places it on the table.

MATRON. Is the police cutter here?

Sherlock Holmes holds up a hand to shush her. He checks to make sure John Watson is gone.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. Mustn't allow Watson to see you out of that matron's uniform. He might realize who you *really* are.

MATRON. There was a moment this evening when I thought Signor Fonseca recognized me. But he didn't.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. No.

MATRON. I should go.

SHERLOCK HOLMES. You should have left already, but you would insist on "helping."

MATRON. And did I?

SHERLOCK HOLMES. You were indispensable. Thank you.

MATRON. For?

SHERLOCK HOLMES. For bringing me home.

MATRON. Thank you. For saving my life. Oh. I found that in that window seat.

The Matron nods at the small case. She exits.

Sherlock Holmes opens the small case. He takes from it—

A violin and bow.

Sherlock Holmes plays.

Curtain falls.

End of Play

Postscript

Now that you have read HOLMES AND WATSON, you know that the character list at the front of the script is a bit of a cheat, in the tradition of *Sleuth*. We don't want to give the game away by including names like "Irene Adler" and "The Real Sherlock Holmes." So, Equity rules notwithstanding, please do everything you can to keep the doubling scheme a mystery.