

**The Novel Stage Adventures of
Sherlock Holmes:
The Hound of the Baskervilles**

Based on the Novel by Arthur Conan Doyle

Adapted By

Bart Lovins

The Novel Stage Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: The Hound of the Baskervilles

by Bart Lovins

Characters

Doctor John H Watson
Sherlock Holmes
Sir Henry Baskerville
Jack Stapleton
Beryl Stapleton
Doctor James Mortimer
Eliza Barrymore
Ancestor Sir Hugo Baskerville
Maiden
Sir Charles Baskerville
Seldon – non-speaking
Waiter – non-speaking
Train Conductor – voice-over (possibly pre-recorded)
Wagonette Driver – non-speaking
Simpson's Waiter – non-speaking
Ancestor Elizabeth Baskerville – non-speaking
Ancestor Rear-Admiral Baskerville – non-speaking
Ancestor Sir William Baskerville – non-speaking
Hound – puppet and an offstage voice

(All characters may be played by a cast of 6-8.)

The Novel Stage Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: The Hound of the Baskervilles

Act 1

Scene 1 – Baskerville Hall On Dartmoor, Summer 1891

(Music 1 in. Curtain rises. Music 1 out with a thunderclap and flash of lightning. The sound of howling wind is followed by growling, snarling, and an ungodly beastly howl. Sir Charles enters in the darkness and lies face down upon the ground.)

Sir Charles: (Unseen.) Merciful God, no! No, no, no!

(Another thunderclap and flash of lightning and Sir Charles' body is revealed. Doctor Mortimer runs on.)

Mortimer: (Offstage.) Sir Charles! (Onstage.) Sir Charles?

(As the wind blows and the thunder rumbles, Mortimer kneels by the body, checks Charles' pulse, then stands. He makes the sign of the cross and looks around the body. Suddenly out of the corner of his eye, he sees something on the ground. He points at it, then backs away in horror. Mortimer is suddenly startled by the haunting howl of a beast, and he stares out at the Audience in shock. A crack of thunder and a flash of lightning are followed by a blackout and the end of all storm sound. Charles and Mortimer exit in the surrounding darkness. Music 2 in.)

Scene 2 – 221B Baker Street, London; October 1891

(In the surrounding darkness, four Actors enter with chairs, set them in place for the scene, and exit. All set and most props other than these four chairs are pantomimed in this production. Two chairs are placed upstage next to each other to form a settee in front of a bay window. Two additional chairs are placed on either side of a table downstage. The entrance to the apartment is across from a fireplace and a doorway to adjoining bedrooms. Next to the entrance is a liquor cabinet. Lights change. John Watson enters on the street outside 221B Baker Street. As Watson speaks, Sherlock Holmes enters and finds a walking stick leaning against the apartment doorframe. Holmes takes the walking stick, unlocks, and enters the apartment.)

Watson: (Aside.) I had seen little of Holmes lately. My marriage had drifted us away from each other. The home-centered interests which rise up around the man who first finds himself master of his own establishment were sufficient to absorb all my attention. At the same time, Holmes remained in our lodgings in Baker Street, alternating from week to week between cocaine and ambition.

(Lights change. Music 2 out. Holmes places the walking stick down by the fireplace and picks up a small vial from the corner of the mantelpiece. He holds the vial up to the light. He contemplates the contents and then decisively puts it back and instead plays his violin. Music 3 in.)

Watson: (Aside.) It is hard to believe, perhaps, but at the time, it was possible to buy without prescription laudanum, morphine – even arsenic – at any London apothecary. Cocaine, for instance, was thought to be the perfect panacea for innumerable ailments from toothaches and hysteria to hay fever and melancholy. Only recently had the medical community begun to grow disquieted about the unregulated use of such narcotics and their consequences. (Walking down the street.) One afternoon in October of 1891 – when my way led me through Baker Street – I was seized with a keen desire to climb the stairs to 221B and see Holmes again.

(Lights change. Sound of steps on the stairs. Holmes stops playing the violin [Music 3 out] and counts each of Watson's steps, using the bow as if he were a conductor counting music beats. On Watson's last step before knocking, the board beneath him creaks. Holmes speaks before Watson has a chance to knock.)

Holmes: Enter.

(Watson enters the apartment.)

Holmes: (Warmly.) Ah, my dear Watson! I am delighted to see you! I trust that Mrs. Watson has entirely recovered from all the little excitements connected with our adventure of *The Sign of Four*?
(Holmes puts the violin and bow away by the fireplace and picks up the walking stick.)

Watson: Thank you, we are both very well. (Aside.) His manner was not effusive. It seldom was. (Closing the door and turning to Holmes.) But he was glad, I think, to see me.

(As if in response, Holmes throws the walking stick at Watson. Watson catches it just before it cracks him across the nose.)

Holmes: Well, Watson, what do you make of my visitor's walking stick? (Sitting on the settee.) It was left behind while I was out.

(Watson follows as far as possible Holmes' methods.)

Watson: (Reading the inscription on the walking stick.) Hum, I think that this *Doctor James Mortimer* is a successful medical man and well established since those who know him give him this mark of their appreciation.

Holmes: Good!

Watson: (Noticing the worn down thick-iron ferrule.) I think also that the probability lies in him being a country practitioner who does a great deal of his visiting on foot.

Holmes: (Lighting a cigarette.) Excellent! Why so?

Watson: (More confidently.) Because this stick, though originally a very handsome one, has been so knocked about that I can hardly imagine a town practitioner carrying it.

Holmes: Perfectly sound!

Watson: (Returning to the inscription.) And then again, there is the inscription *friends of the C. C. H.* I should guess that to be the something *hunt*, the local hunt like as not.

(Laying down his cigarette, Holmes takes the walking stick from Watson and carries it to the window where he inspects it with a convex lens from his pocket.)

Holmes: Really, Watson, you excel yourself! In all the accounts – which you have been so good as to give of my own small achievements – you have habitually underrated your own abilities.

Watson: (With some self-importance.) Has anything escaped me? I trust that there is nothing of consequence which I have overlooked?

Holmes: I am afraid, my dear Watson, that most of your conclusions were erroneous.

Watson: (Crestfallen.) Oh?

Holmes: Not that you are entirely wrong. The man is undoubtedly a country practitioner. And he walks a good deal.

Watson: Then I was right.

Holmes: To that extent. I would suggest, for example, that a presentation to a doctor is more likely to come from a hospital than from a hunt – and when the initials *C. C.* are placed before that hospital, the words *Charing Cross* very naturally suggest themselves.

Watson: You *may* be right.

Holmes: (Smiling.) The probability lies in that direction. (Pointing to the liquor cabinet.) Hum?

Watson: (Nodding.) Hum.

(Holmes hands the stick to Watson and pulls a decanter and two tumblers from the liquor cabinet.)

Watson: And on what occasion would his friends unite to give him a pledge of their goodwill?

Holmes: (Taking the decanter and tumblers over to the table.) Obviously, at the moment when Doctor Mortimer withdrew from the service of the hospital in order to start a country practice.

Watson: That certainly *seems* probable.

Holmes: (Pouring drinks with a mischievous smile.) Yes. There emerges an amiable, unambitious, absent-minded family practitioner and possessor of a favorite dog, which I should describe roughly as being larger than a terrier and smaller than a mastiff.

(Holmes and Watson pick up their glasses and clink them against each other.)

Watson: (Laughing incredulously.) Stretching your inferences a bit far now, aren't you, Holmes?

(They sit and drink.)

Holmes: On the contrary, I think they are fairly justified. It is only an amiable man who receives testimonials, only an unambitious one who abandons a London career for the country, and only an absent-minded one who leaves behind his stick and not his card.

Watson: And the dog...?

(Holmes reaches out his hand in askance, and Watson places the cane in it.)

Holmes: Has been in the habit of carrying this stick behind his master. Being a heavy stick, the dog has held it tightly by the middle, and the marks of his teeth are very plainly visible. The dog's jaw, as shown in the space between these marks, is too broad, in my opinion, for a terrier and not broad enough for a mastiff.

(Holmes hands the walking stick to Watson and picks up his cigarette.)

Watson: I am always baffled until you explain your process. And yet, I believe that my senses are as good as yours.

(Holmes blows a ring of smoke up to the ceiling.)

Holmes: The world is full of obvious things which nobody ever observes. For example, how often have you climbed the steps which lead up to this room?

Watson: Some hundreds of times.

Holmes: Then, how many are there?

Watson: How many? I don't know.

Holmes: That is just my point. **(Stepping out into the hallway to demonstrate.)** Now, *I* know that there are seventeen steps because I have observed them, just as I have observed that the landing creaks. **(Peering down out the window.)** Well, by Jove, there's the prodigal medical practitioner now, if I am not very much mistaken.

Watson: **(Rising to depart, the walking stick still in hand.)** Ah, yes. Well, I had best leave you to it then, Holmes.

Holmes: **(Closing the door.)** Stay, I beg you, Watson. He is a professional brother of yours, and your presence may be of assistance to me.

Watson: As you wish.

Holmes: **(His ear to the door.)** Now is the dramatic moment of fate, Watson, when you hear a step upon the stair which is walking into your life, and you know not whether for good or ill.

(Mortimer enters and steps on the creaky floorboard. Holmes opens the door before he can knock.)

Holmes: Come in, Doctor Mortimer!

(Startled, Mortimer enters the apartment. He sees his walking stick in Watson's hands and runs to retrieve it.)

Mortimer: **(Joyously.)** I am so very glad. I would not lose that stick for the world.

Holmes: A presentation, I see.

Mortimer: Yes, sir.

Holmes: **(To Watson.)** From Charing Cross Hospital?

Mortimer: **(Nodding.)** From one or two friends there on the occasion of my...

Holmes: Resignation?

Mortimer: No, sir. My marriage.

Holmes: **(Shaking his head.)** Dear, dear, that's bad!

Mortimer: **(Blinking through his glasses in mild astonishment.)** Why is it bad?

Holmes: Only that you have disarranged our little deductions.

Watson: Your marriage, you say?

Mortimer: Yes, sir. I married, and so left the hospital and struck out on my own.

Holmes: **(To Watson.)** Come, come, we are not so far wrong, after all.

Watson: **(To Mortimer.)** And what of your dog, sir?

Mortimer: Dog?

Watson: **(To Holmes.)** Hah!

Mortimer: Do you mean Yorick, my spaniel?

Holmes: (Snapping his fingers.) A spaniel! But of course.

Watson: Hum.

Mortimer: (Nodding to Holmes.) I presume that it is Mister Sherlock Holmes whom I am addressing?

Holmes: (Nodding.) Sir. (Gesturing to Watson.) And my friend, Doctor Watson.

Mortimer: (Nodding to Watson.) Glad to meet you, sir.

(Watson nods to Mortimer.)

Mortimer: I have heard your name mentioned in connection with that of your friend.

Holmes: Yes. Watson has been good enough to chronicle one or two of my trifling experiences.

Mortimer: You interest me very much, Mister Holmes. As an amateur anthropologist, I had hardly expected so dolichocephalic a skull or such well-marked supra-orbital development. Would you have any objection to me running my finger along your parietal fissure?

(Watson and Holmes exchange glances and laugh.)

Mortimer: It is not my intention to be fulsome, but I confess, sir, that I covet your skull.

Holmes: (Offering Mortimer a place to sit.) I presume, though, that it was not merely for the purpose of examining my skull that you have done me the honor to call?

Mortimer: (Leaning his walking stick against the wall and sitting.) No, sir, no. I came to you, Mister Holmes, because I am suddenly confronted with a most serious and extraordinary problem. (Producing a document from a pocket.) This document dates back to 1742 and concerns Sir Charles' great grandfather, Hugo Baskerville, the Baron of Grimpen on Dartmoor some two hundred years ago.

Holmes: But I understand that it is something more modern and practical upon which you wish to consult me?

Mortimer: (Checking his watch.) Most modern. A most practical, pressing matter, which must be decided within two hours. (Putting his watch away in the wrong pocket.) But the manuscript is short and is intimately connected with the affair. With your permission?

Holmes: (Nodding.) Please.

(Music 4 in. Holmes leans back in his chair, places his fingertips together, and closes his eyes with an air of resignation. Lights change. Action is continuous.)

Scene 3 – Baskerville Hall, 1674

(Mortimer raises his glasses to rest atop his head and turns the document to the light.)

Mortimer: (Reading in a high, cracking voice.) The origin of the Hound of the Baskervilles – set down with all belief that it occurred even as is here set forth.

(Sir Hugo Baskerville enters.)

Hugo: Know then that in the year sixteen hundred and seventy-four – the time of the Great Rebellion – that this Manor of Baskerville was held by Hugo of that name. A most wild, profane, and godless man, Hugo Baskerville was known for a certain wanton and cruel humor.

(A Maiden enters wearing a shawl.)

Mortimer: It chanced that this Hugo came to love if, indeed, so dark a passion may be known under so bright a name...

Maiden: The daughter of a yeoman who held lands near the Baskerville estate. But the young maiden, being discreet and of good repute, would ever avoid him.

(Hugo frightens the Maiden and chases her up onto the settee. She stands cowering upon it.)

Mortimer: It came to pass that on All Hallows' Eve of that year, Sir Hugo stole down upon her father's farm and carried off the maiden and locked her in an upper chamber of the hall...

(Hugo laughs wickedly and exits.)

Mortimer: (Gesturing to Hugo.) After which, Sir Hugo rushed down to the dining hall where he and his friends sat down to a long carouse, as was their nightly custom. (Gesturing to the Maiden.) Now, the poor lass upstairs was like to have her wits turned at the singing and shouting and terrible oaths that came up from the hall below.

(With the aid of Mortimer's hand, the Maiden climbs down off the settee and exits, leaving her shawl behind in her effort.)

Mortimer: At last, in stress and fear, she did that which might have daunted the bravest or most active man for, by the aid of the growth of ivy which covered the south wall, she climbed down and fled homeward across the moor.

(Hugo enters, singing drunkenly. Mortimer returns to Hugo's side.)

Mortimer: It chanced that some little time later, Hugo left his guests to carry food and drink with other worse things, perchance in mind to his captive.

(Upon discovering her absence, Hugo stops singing and angrily picks up the shawl left behind by Maiden.)

Hugo: The cage is empty, and the bird escaped! **(Leaping upon the settee and holding the shawl aloft in a clenched fist.)** I, this very night, render my body and soul to the Powers of Evil if I might but overtake the wench.

Mortimer: Whereat Hugo ran from the house ablaze with fury across the moor.

(Hugo races to another stage area. Music 4 out.)

Mortimer: At length, some revelers from the dining hall took off in pursuit of Sir Hugo and the maiden. They had gone a mile or two when they came to a halt upon a clearing.

(Music 5 in. Lights change. The howls of a snarling beast interrupt the story and Hugo's chase. Hugo turns to face the audience in terror.)

Mortimer: And there standing over the prone form of Hugo Baskerville stood a foul thing, a great, black beast, shaped like a large hound, and then even as they looked on, the thing tore the throat out of Hugo Baskerville.

Hugo: **(Reaching out to protect himself.)** No, no, no!

(Lights change with the sound of a beast ripping into Hugo's throat. Hugo exits in the surrounding darkness.)

Mortimer: Such is the tale of the coming of the hound, which is said to have plagued the Baskerville family – many of whom have been unhappy in their deaths, which have been sudden, bloody, and mysterious. I hereby counsel all of that cursed name to forbear from crossing the moor in those dark hours when the powers of evil are exalted.

(Music 5 out. Lights change. Action is continuous.)

Scene 4 – 221B Baker Street, 1891

(Done reading, Mortimer stares across at Holmes. Holmes yawns and tosses the last of his cigarette into the fire grate.)

Mortimer: Well? Do you not find it interesting?

Holmes: To a collector of fairy tales.

Mortimer: Then, Mister Holmes, we will give you something a little more recent and factual.

(Mortimer hands Holmes a newspaper clipping.)

Mortimer: This is a short account from the Devonshire Chronicle describing the public facts in connection with Sir Charles Baskerville's death.

Holmes: **(Scanning the article.)** This article, you say, contains all the public facts?

Mortimer: It does.

(Holmes passes the article to Watson. Watson reads it and places it upon the table.)

Holmes: Then let me have the private ones.

Mortimer: **(Showing signs of some strong emotion.)** In doing so, I am telling that which I have not confided to anyone.

(Holmes motions to Watson to pour Mortimer a drink. Watson retrieves another tumbler from the liquor cabinet. Holmes leans back and puts his fingertips together.)

Holmes: **(Impassively.)** Continue.

Mortimer: As I was out walking my dog at the time, I was close enough to hear Sir Charles'

screams and was able to reach him within minutes of his death by following his footsteps. The shape of which, after a point, changed, indicating that he began walking on tiptoe. When I came upon him, I carefully examined the body but found no physical injury of any kind, and at first, I did not observe any traces upon the ground round the body. But then I did – fresh and clear.

(Watson hands Mortimer the tumbler.)

Watson: Footprints?

Mortimer: **(Looking strangely at them for an instant.)** Footprints.

Holmes: A man's or a woman's?

Mortimer: **(Whispering with a thrill in his voice.)** Mister Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!

(Music 6 in. Mortimer downs his drink in one gulp and places the tumbler upon the table.)

Watson: **(Aside.)** I confess, at these words, a shudder passed through me.

Holmes: **(Leaning forward with excitement.)** You saw this?

Mortimer: **(Nodding.)** As clearly as I see the two of you. But...

Holmes: Why do you hesitate?

Mortimer: There is a realm in which even the most acute and most experienced of detectives is helpless.

Holmes: You mean that the thing is supernatural?

Mortimer: Since the tragedy, Mister Holmes, there have been several incidents that are hard to reconcile with the settled order of nature.

Holmes: For example?

Mortimer: I find that before the death of Sir Charles, numerous people had seen a creature upon the moor, a huge creature, luminous, ghastly, and spectral exactly corresponding to the hell-hound of the Baskerville legend.

(Music 6 out.)

Holmes: **(Shrugging his shoulders.)** Yet you must admit that the footmark is material.

Mortimer: The original hound was material enough to tug a man's throat out, and yet *he* was diabolical as well.

Watson: I see that you have quite gone over to the supernaturalists.

Holmes: Doctor Mortimer, if you hold these views, how then can I be of assistance?

Mortimer: By advising me as to what I should do about Sir Charles' nephew, Henry Baskerville.

Watson: He being the heir?

Mortimer: Yes. We inquired and found this young gentleman farming in America.

Holmes: There is no other claimant, I presume?

Mortimer: None. Sir Charles had but two brothers of whom poor Sir Charles was the eldest. The second brother, who died young, is the father of this lad, Henry. The third, Rodger, fled England under a black cloud to South America, where he died of yellow fever. **(Searching and finally finding his watch.)** Henry is the last of the Baskervilles. In one hour and five minutes, I meet him at Waterloo Station. **(Putting his watch away in the correct pocket.)** Now Mister Holmes, what would you advise me to do with him?

Holmes: You've made arrangements for the night?

Mortimer: Yes. Some weeks ago, I booked adjoining accommodations at the Northumberland Hotel.

Holmes: **(After some consideration.)** I recommend, sir, that you proceed to Waterloo to meet Sir Henry Baskerville, return with him to your hotel and get a good night's rest.

Mortimer: And then?

Holmes: And then Doctor Mortimer, I will be much obliged if you would both join me for brunch at Simpson's tomorrow morning. **(Opening the door.)** Shall we say ten o'clock?

(Mortimer rises and, taking a pen from a jacket pocket, scribbles the appointment on his shirt-cuff as Holmes goes to get the door.)

Mortimer: I will do so, Mister Holmes.

(Mortimer pockets the pen and hurries toward the door in his strange, peering, absentminded fashion.)

Watson: **(Picking up the newspaper article from the table.)** Doctor Mortimer?

Mortimer: Hum?

Watson: Your clipping.

Mortimer: Oh! Yes. Thank you.

(Mortimer collects the article from Watson.)

Mortimer: Will you be joining us, Doctor Watson?

Watson: **(To Holmes with a shrug.)** Mary *is* away on a visit.

Holmes: Then by all means.

Mortimer: **(Stepping out into the hallway.)** Very good, then, we'll reconvene tomorrow at eleven.

Holmes: **(Pointing out the inscription on Mortimer's cuff.)** Ten.

Mortimer: **(Turning to Holmes.)** Hum? **(Reviewing the notes on his cuff.)** Oh! Yes, ten. Thank you.

(With a nod, Mortimer turns to exit. Holmes snaps at Watson and points to the walking stick. Watson tosses it to Holmes.)

Holmes: **(Stopping him at the head of the stair.)** Only one more thing, Doctor Mortimer.

Mortimer: Hmm?

(Holmes passes the walking stick to Mortimer.)

Mortimer: Oh! Yes. Thank you.

(Mortimer exits. Holmes closes the door behind him.)

Holmes: What do you make of it?

Watson: It is bewildering.

Holmes: There are points of distinction about it. That change in the footprints, for example?

Watson: Mortimer said that Sir Charles had walked on tiptoe down the alley?

Holmes: **(Shaking his head.)** Why should a man tiptoe down an alley?

Watson: He was running!

Holmes: Yes, Watson – running desperately, running for his life, running until his heart burst!

(Lights change. Music 7 in. Action is continuous.)

Scene 5 – Simpson's Tavern, The Next Morning

(In the surrounding darkness, the chairs are re-positioned.)

Watson: **(Aside.)** I was *running* late the next morning thanks to a garrulous patient and discovered Holmes sitting alone at a small booth of Simpson's nibbling a biscuit.

(Music 7 out. Holmes is seated upon a half-circle of chairs around a table. Watson helps himself to bacon from one of several plates before Holmes and squeezes in alongside him at the table. Holmes looks Watson over in his singularly introspective fashion.)

Holmes: Wedlock suits you. I think, Watson, that you have put on seven and a half pounds.

Watson: **(Correcting.)** Seven!

Holmes: **(With a kindly eye.)** Indeed, just a trifle more, I fancy, Watson.

(Watson glances at the piece of bacon in hand and, thinking better of it, lays it back on the plate.)

Holmes: And in practice again, I observe.

Watson: How did you know?

Holmes: **(Chuckling.)** If a gentleman walks in with a bulge on the right side of his vest showing where he has secreted his stethoscope, I must be dull, indeed, if I do not pronounce him to be an active member of the medical profession.

Watson: **(Placing the stethoscope upon the table.)** My dear Holmes, you would certainly have been burned as a witch had you lived a few centuries ago.

(They laugh. A Waiter escorts Mortimer and Sir Henry Baskerville to the table. Henry is dressed in a peculiar ruddy overcoat, bolo tie, cowboy hat and western boots. Holmes and Watson rise to greet them. Henry shakes their hand warmly.)

Mortimer: Gentlemen, Sir Henry Baskerville.

Holmes: Good morning.

Watson: Morning.

Henry: **(In a distinctly American accent.)** Gentlemen. You know the strange thing is, Mister Holmes, that if my friend here hadn't brought us together this morning, I might've sought you out on my own.

Holmes: Indeed? Pray, take a seat, Sir Henry.

Henry: **(Sitting.)** I understand you work out little puzzles, and I've had one this morning, which wants more thinking out than I am able to give it.

Holmes: **(Sitting.)** How may I be of service?

(Watson and Mortimer sit with Watson on the outside across from Holmes. The Waiter returns, wheeling in a large joint of meat on a dinner trolley. The Waiter carves and serves as the men talk and enjoy their brunch. Once done, the Waiter exits with the trolley. As the men speak, the soft clatter of silverware against china punctuates their conversation.)

Henry: **(Laying a half-sheet of paper folded into four upon the table.)** It is this letter, if you can call it that, which reached me this morning.

Holmes: **(Unfolding and reading.)** As you value your life or your reason, keep away from the moor.

(Holmes glances keenly across at Henry.)

Henry: Only a joke, as like as not.

(Holmes holds the letter up to the light.)

Holmes: Hum! What do *you* make of it, Doctor Mortimer?

Watson: You must allow that there is nothing supernatural about this, at any rate?

Mortimer: No, sir, but it might very well come from someone convinced that the business is supernatural.

(Holmes holds the letter near his face and stares away in deep thought.)

Henry: **(Sharply.)** Supernatural? What business? It seems that you gentlemen know a great deal more than I do about my own affairs.

Holmes: Halloa! Halloa! What's this?

Henry: Well, Mister Holmes?

Holmes: **(Folding and tossing the message back to Henry with a gleam in his eye.)** Nothing. It is a blank half-sheet of paper, without even a watermark upon it. I think we have drawn as much as we can from it. Now, Sir Henry, has anything else of interest happened since you arrived?

Henry: Why, no, Mister Holmes. I think not.

Holmes: You have not observed anyone follow or watch you?

Henry: **(With a laugh.)** I seem to have walked right into the thick of a dime novel. Why in thunder should anyone follow or watch me?

Holmes: You are familiar with the Baskerville legend?

Henry: Of course, ever since I was in the nursery.

Watson: Then you've heard of the hound?

Henry: Naturally, though I've never taken it seriously before. Has all this something to do with my uncle's death?

(The room grows silent as Henry's question lingers in the air.)

Henry: **(With a half-hearted laugh.)** Why you don't seem quite to have made up your mind whether it's a case for the police or the clergy.

Holmes: Precisely.

Henry: And now there's this threat sent to my hotel. I suppose that fits in somehow?

Mortimer: It does seem to show that someone knows more than we do about what goes on upon the

moor.

- Holmes:** Did anyone else profit at all by Sir Charles' will?
- Mortimer:** The Widow Barrymore, the head of the household, had a thousand pounds bequeathed to her.
- Watson:** Ah! Did she know that she would receive this?
- Mortimer:** Yes. Sir Charles was very fond of talking about the provisions of his will.
- Watson:** That is very interesting.
- Mortimer:** I hope you do not look with suspicion upon everyone who received a legacy from Sir Charles.
- Watson:** Oh? Why pray tell?
- Mortimer:** For I also had a thousand pounds left to me.
- Watson:** **(Suspiciously.)** Indeed! And anyone else?
- Mortimer:** **(Shaking his head.)** Just several public charities to which Sir Charles was a benefactor. The residue all went to Sir Henry.
- Watson:** And how much was that?
- Henry:** Seven hundred and forty thousand pounds.
- (All stop eating. The silence is interrupted by Watson's fork falling from his hand and clattering upon his plate.)**
- Holmes:** **(Raising his eyebrows in surprise.)** I had no idea that so gigantic a sum was involved.
- Mortimer:** Sir Charles was exceedingly generous, but we did not know how rich he was until his death. The total value of the estate is close on to a million.
- Watson:** Dear me! It is a stake for which a man might well play a desperate game.
- Holmes:** **(Agreeing.)** Hum. The practical point we now have to decide Sir Henry is whether it is or is not advisable for you to go to Baskerville Hall.
- Henry:** **(With grit and determination.)** There is no devil in hell, Mister Holmes, and there is no man upon earth who can prevent me from going to the home of my own people.
- Holmes:** Quite so. There is only one provision which I must make. You certainly must not go alone.
- Henry:** Doctor Mortimer returns with me.
- Holmes:** But Doctor Mortimer has his practice to attend to, and his house is miles from yours, yes?
- (Mortimer nods.)**
- Holmes:** No, Sir Henry, you must take with you a trusty man who will be always by your side.
- Henry:** Is it possible that you could come yourself, Mister Holmes?
- Holmes:** **(Shaking his head.)** If matters came to a crisis, I should endeavor to be present in person, but it is impossible for me to be absent from London for an indefinite time. **(Whispering confidentially.)** In *fact*, one of the most revered names in England is being besmirched by a blackmailer, and only I can stop a disastrous scandal. No, it is impossible for me to go to Dartmoor.
- Henry:** Whom would you recommend, then?
- (Music 8 in. Holmes turns from Henry and looks at Watson. Henry does likewise, followed by Mortimer. Watson looks over his shoulder only to realize he is the object of their gaze. Lights change. In the surrounding darkness, Mortimer and Henry exit. Action is continuous.)**

Scene 6 – Paddington Train Station, The Next Day

(Music 8 out, a train whistle blows, and ambient train station noise plays under dialogue. In the surrounding darkness, the Driver enters and arranges the four chairs to form a wagonette – two rows of two chairs next to each other facing the other two chairs. Lights change, revealing Holmes and Watson in a different stage area.)

- Holmes:** I will not bias your mind by suggesting theories or suspicions, Watson. I wish you simply to report facts in the fullest possible manner back to me, and you can leave me to do the

theorizing.

Watson: What sort of facts?

Holmes: Anything which may seem to have a bearing, however indirect, upon the case.

Watson: I will do my best.

Holmes: When a crisis comes, as it will do, I will direct how you shall act. Keep your revolver near you night and day, and never relax your precautions.

Watson: You're confident you can't join us?

Holmes: Quite.

Watson: **(Intrigued.)** What is this blackmail case you spoke of at brunch?

Holmes: Hum, I'm afraid you've called my bluff.

Watson: Bluffing? Whatever for?

(Holmes looks around and then draws Watson close. Music 9 in and ambient train station noise fades out.)

Holmes: I shall lay my cards on the table, Watson. Over the years, I have become conscious of some deep organizing power which stands in the way of the law. Again, and again, in cases of the most varying sorts – forgery cases, robberies, murders – I have felt the presence of this force. At last, I have seized my thread and followed it until it led me, after a thousand cunning windings, to ex-Professor Moriarty of mathematical celebrity.

Watson: I've never heard of him.

Holmes: Ah, there's the genius and the wonder of the thing! The man pervades London, and no one has heard of him.

Watson: What has he done, then?

Holmes: His career has been an extraordinary one. He is a man of good birth and excellent education, endowed with a phenomenal mathematical faculty. On the strength of a treatise upon the Binomial Theorem he wrote at the age of twenty-one, he won the Mathematical Chair at one of our smaller universities and had, to all appearances, a most brilliant career before him. But dark rumors gathered round him, and eventually, he was compelled to resign.

Watson: And the source of these dark rumors?

Holmes: **(Feigning humility.)** My dear Watson, modesty forbids.

Watson: Hum. There's a first.

Holmes: He is the Napoleon of crime, Watson. He is the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city.

Watson: How does he manage it, this math teacher?

Holmes: He does little himself. He only plans. But his agents are numerous and splendidly organized. If there is a crime to be done, word is passed to the Professor; and the matter is organized and carried out.

Watson: Surely if his agents are caught...

Holmes: Money is found for their bail or defense. But the central power behind the agents is never caught – never so much as suspected. This is the organization which I have deduced, Watson, and which I must devote my whole energy to exposing and breaking up.

(Music 9 out and ambient train station noise returns as Henry rushes on flush with anger. So furious is he that he is hardly articulate. Mortimer follows him on.)

Henry: Well, I'll be hanged!

Holmes: Halloa, my dear fellow, what on earth is the matter?

Henry: Seems to me they are playing me for a sucker at that hotel. They'll find they've monkeyed around with the wrong man. By thunder, I can take a joke with the best, Mister Holmes, but they've gone a bit over the mark.

Holmes: I take it you have something to report before your departure?

Henry: Well, it depends upon what you think worth reporting.

Holmes: Anything out of the ordinary routine of life.

Henry: **(Smiling.)** I don't know much of British life yet, but I hope that to lose one of your boots

is not part of the ordinary routine of life over here.

Mortimer: My dear sir, it is only mislaid.

Henry: Well, he asked me for anything outside the ordinary routine.

Holmes: Exactly, however foolish the incident may seem.

Watson: You have lost *one* of your boots, you say?

Henry: I put them both outside my hotel room door last night to be polished, and there was only one in the morning. Well, Mister Holmes, you'll excuse my troubling you...

Holmes: I think it's well worth troubling about.

Mortimer: Why you look very serious over it.

Holmes: **(To Henry.)** How do you explain it?

Henry: **(Sharply.)** I don't. It seems the queerest thing to ever happen.

Holmes: **(Thoughtfully.)** The queerest perhaps...

(Train whistle.)

Train Conductor: **(Voice Over.)** Paddington Station. All aboard for Reading, Taunton, and Devonshire.

Holmes: Ah! There's your train.

(Mortimer leads Henry past Holmes and Watson.)

Mortimer: Au revoir, and good-morning!

Holmes: Au revoir.

(Mortimer goes and sits in the wagonette in the darkness.)

Holmes: Sir Henry?

(Henry stops and turns to Holmes.)

Holmes: Superstition or not, it is probably wise to bear in mind that *queer* old legend: Avoid the moor in those hours of darkness...

Henry: When the powers of evil are exalted.

(Baskerville nods and joins Mortimer in the wagonette. Music 10 in and ambient train station noise out. Holmes turns and shakes Watson's hand and pulls him aside.)

Holmes: **(Confidentially.)** I tell you, Watson, I'm not easy in my mind about it.

Watson: About what?

Holmes: About sending you. It's an ugly business, Watson – an ugly, dangerous business – and the more I see of it, the less I like it.

(Watson laughs nervously.)

Holmes: You may laugh, but I give you my word that I shall be very glad to have you back safe and sound in Baker Street once more.

(Watson follows after Henry, then turns to the Audience. Lights change.)

Watson: **(Aside.)** I looked back at the platform when our train had left it far behind and saw the tall, austere figure of Holmes standing motionless and gazing after us.

(Train whistle and Music 10 out as lights change. Action is continuous.)

Scene 7 – Wagonette To Baskerville Hall, Dusk

(In the surrounding darkness, Holmes exits. In another stage area, the Driver stands ready behind two of the four wagonette chairs. Watson joins Henry and Mortimer already seated in the wagonette.)

Train Conductor: **(Voice Over.)** Coombe Tracey Station. All off for Devonshire and Grimpen on Dartmoor.

Watson: **(Aside as he climbs into the carriage.)** My dear Holmes, our train pulled up at a small wayside station where a wagonette was waiting and, in a few minutes, we were flying swiftly past rolling pasture lands and old gabled houses peeking out amid thick green foliage.

(The Driver flicks his reins. Horse carriage sounds under dialogue. Lights change.)

Watson: **(Aside.)** The journey was a swift, and pleasant one spent making the more intimate

acquaintance of my two companions.

Henry: I was a boy at the time of my father's death and afterward was sent straight to my mother's family in America. I tell you, Devonshire is all as new to me as it is to Doctor Watson, and I'm as keen as possible to see the moor.

Mortimer: **(Pointing out the carriage window.)** Are you? There it is, Sir Henry. There is your first sight of the moor.

(Music 11 in. Fade Carriage sound under music. Mortimer and Henry pantomime conversation.)

Watson: **(Aside.)** The more one sees of it, Holmes, the more the spirit of the moor sinks into one's soul – its vastness, and also its grim charm. When you are once out upon its bosom, you have left all traces of modern England behind you. But I detect the words – facts, Watson, facts – forming on your lips. So, facts.

Mortimer: **(Finishing a thought.)** And *that's* a fact. The farmers about here don't like it, sir.

Watson: What's that?

Mortimer: Seldon, the Notting Hill murderer, has escaped from Princetown. He's been out three days now... **(Pointing.)** and the police watch every road and every station, but they've had no sight of him yet.

Watson: **(Pointing.)** On the summit in front of us was a mounted officer, dark and stern, watching the road along which we traveled.

Henry: A murderer, you say?

(A cold, haunting wind sweeps down and sets them shivering.)

Watson: **(Nodding.)** I remember the Seldon case well. Holmes had taken an interest in it on account of the peculiar ferocity of the crime and the wanton brutality that had marked all the assassin's actions.

Mortimer: **(Agreeing.)** So atrocious was his conduct; his death sentence's commutation had been due to some doubts as to his complete sanity.

Henry: Just think. Somewhere, on that desolate plain, lurks a fiendish man, hiding in a burrow like a wild animal.

(They all fall silent and pull their overcoats more closely around themselves as the haunting wind whistles around them.)

Watson: **(Aside.)** It was nearly dusk, and before us lay the long, gloomy curve of the moor broken by jagged and sinister rocks, and then there rose two high, narrow towers ever dark against the evening sky...

Mortimer: **(Pointing.)** Ah, Baskerville Hall.

(Henry rises and stares with flushed cheeks and shining eyes. Action is continuous.)

Scene 8 – Baskerville Hall, Exterior, Evening

(Lights change. As the carriage comes to a halt, Eliza Barrymore steps into the light. The three men step out of the wagonette. The Driver exits with chairs not required for the next scene.)

Watson: **(Aside.)** The house lay before us draped in a dark veil of ivy.

(Lights change. Music 11 out.)

Eliza: Welcome, Sir Henry! Welcome to Baskerville Hall!

Henry: **(Nodding.)** Thank you, Widow...

Eliza: **(Curtsying.)** Eliza Barrymore, sir.

Henry: Yes, of course. Thank you, Eliza.

(Eliza curtsies and returns to her housework, including rearranging the chairs in a line upstage.)

Mortimer: You don't mind my heading straight home, Sir Henry?

Henry: Surely, you will stay and have some dinner?

Mortimer: Thank you, no. I would stay to show you over the house, but my wife is expecting me, as is my dog, Yorick. Besides, Eliza will be a better guide than I. Good-bye, and never hesitate night or day to send for me if I can be of service.