

# **The Novel Stage Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: The Sign of Four**

*Based On The Novel by Arthur Conan Doyle*

*Adapted by*

**Bart Lovins**

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# **The Novel Stage Adventures of Sherlock Holmes:**

## **The Sign of Four**

*by Bart Lovins*

### ***Characters***

Captain Arthur Morstan  
Major John Sholto  
Dr Somerton  
Jonathan Small  
Dr John H Watson  
Sherlock Holmes  
Mrs Hudson  
Mary Morstan  
Mahomet Singh  
Abdullah Khan  
Dost Akbar  
Achmet  
McMurdo  
Thaddeus Sholto  
Bartholomew Sholto  
Mrs Bernstone  
Athelney Jones  
Aurora Smith  
Jack Smith  
Lieutenant Wiggins  
Johann Jacobson  
Mordecai Smith  
Fred Porlock  
A Professor of Mathematics  
Young Mary Morstan – non-speaking  
Hansom cab driver – non-speaking  
Tonga’s Assistant – non-speaking  
Railway Passengers – non-speaking  
Voices – offstage

(All characters may be played by a cast of 10.)

# The Novel Stage Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: The Sign of Four

## Act 1

### *Scene 1 – London’s Victoria Train Station, 1865*

(Music 1 in. Curtain up on the bare stage. Music 1 out under a train whistle. Lights change. Ambient Victorian train station noise in. Railway Passengers enter and place three chairs side by side, forming a bench. Mary Morstan and Doctor Somerton are among the crowd, disguised as Passengers. Some Passengers sit on the bench. Others mill about the station. Captain Morstan enters with his daughter, Young Mary Morstan. They make their silent sad goodbyes. Major Sholto enters and leads Captain Morstan out of the light. A train whistle cues a light change and the changing of the year. Action is continuous.)

### *Scene 2 – London’s Victoria Train Station, 1888*

(Ambient Victorian train station noise continues. Mary Morstan sheds her Passenger costume and replaces Young Mary Morstan as she exits. In the darkness, Doctor Somerton sheds his Passenger costume and assists Captain Morstan and Major Sholto in placing the three chairs around a card table. All three sit. As all other Passengers exit, Mary Morstan inspects the contents of a small flat box from her jacket pocket. Reassured, Mary puts the box away and exits, followed by a final train whistle. Ambient Victorian train noise fades under haunting Indian music – Music 2 in. Action is continuous.)

### *Scene 3 – Andaman Islands Penal Colony, 1877*

(Lights change. The air is thick with humidity and mosquitoes. Major Sholto and Captain Morstan throw money on the table. Doctor Somerton gathers his earnings. Jonathan Small hobbles in with a fourth chair and waits on the other three men. Music 2 out.)

**Somerton:** Let us call it a night, my friends.

**Sholto:** No! Come, doctor, one more hand!

**Morstan:** Yes, Somerton, the night is young.

(A mosquito buzzes around Somerton.)

**Somerton:** Major Sholto, you’ve gone from paying in notes and gold to notes of hand. (Swatting the mosquito.) And for big sums, I might add, Captain Morstan. (Shuffling the playing cards.) See you in the morning, Small.

(Somerton hands the deck of cards to Small.)

**Small:** Shall I clean up, Doctor Somerton?

**Somerton:** How you can merely stand around and watch us play every week, Small, is beyond me. Does it not get tedious?

**Small:** (Tidying up the table and placing the deck of playing cards in the middle of it.) Not at all. I’ve always been fond of a hand at cards myself. And since we prisoners ain’t allowed, it’s almost as good as having one to watch you gentlemen.

**Somerton:** Good enough, then. Till next week, gentlemen.

(Somerton exits. Small eavesdrops on the following conversation as he continues his work.)

**Morstan:** Very well. Good evening.

**Sholto:** I thought things were going my way there for a while tonight.

**Morstan:** Our losses do seem more heavy than usual.

**Sholto:** It’s all up, Morstan. I shall have to send in my papers. I am a ruined man.

**Morstan:** (Producing a couple of cheroots from his pocket.) Nonsense, old chap! I’ve had a nasty facer myself, and I’ve a daughter nearly sixteen back home to support.

**(Captain Morstan hands one to Major Sholto and lights his own with a wooden match from his pocket.)**

**Sholto:** And I've got two sons. Ruined, eh? The both of us. Damned pity!

**Small:** **(Taking a chance.)** Could I have your gentlemen's advice?

**(Major Sholto pays little attention to Small as he focuses on lighting his cheroot with Captain Morstan's assistance.)**

**Sholto:** Well, Small, what is it?

**Small:** **(As he rearranges and dusts the chairs in the room.)** I wanted to ask you, sirs, who is the proper person to whom hidden treasure should be handed over?

**(Music 3 in.)**

**Morstan:** **(Blowing out the match.)** I beg your pardon?

**Small:** You see, I know where half a million worth lies, and being incarcerated, I cannot use it myself.

**Sholto:** **(Taking the cheroot from his lips.)** Half a million, Small?

**Small:** Quite that, sir... in jewels and pearls. It lies there ready for anyone.

**(Major Sholto and Captain Morstan exchange glances.)**

**Sholto:** Well, well... you must not do anything rash. Don't you agree, Morstan?

**Morstan:** Absolutely, Sholto.

**Sholto:** Or that you might repent.

**(Captain Morstan offers Small a cheroot.)**

**Morstan:** Let us hear all about it, Small.

**(Small takes the cheroot.)**

**Small:** Well, sirs...

**(Captain Morstan lights Small's cheroot. Lights change. Action is continuous.)**

#### ***Scene 4 – Andaman Islands Penal Colony, 1877 and Baker Street, 1888***

**(Watson enters with his suit jacket over his arm. The Actors on stage are oblivious to his presence.)**

**Music 3 continues under dialogue.)**

**Watson:** **(Aside)** A very snug little party, don't you think?

**Small:** **(Enjoying his smoke.)** Before being caught for murder back in 1857 and sent here to Andaman Islands Penitentiary...

**(Watson lays his suit jacket over the back of a chair, sits and collects the deck of playing cards from the middle of the table and deals himself a hand of solitaire.)**

**Watson:** A dreary, fever-stricken place, off the coast of Africa. All beyond its walls was infested with wild cannibal natives.

**(Lights change. Sherlock Holmes enters opposite. He places his jacket over the back of the chair opposite Watson. Holmes takes a vial and hypodermic syringe from the corner of the mantelpiece. With nervous fingers, Holmes adjusts the delicate needle and rolls back his left shirt cuff. His eyes rest upon the sinewy forearm and wrist, all dotted and scarred with innumerable puncture-marks. The other Actors on stage, with the notable exception of Watson, are oblivious to his presence.)**

**Small:** I was a guard at Fort Agra.

**Morstan:** Agra? Why, isn't that where the Third Bengal Fusiliers were stationed during the India uprising?

**(Captain Morstan and Major Sholto exit.)**

**Small:** Right you are, sir. One month India lay still and peaceful, the next... **(Aside)** the country was a perfect hell.

**(Small exits, following them offstage. Lights change. Action is continuous.)**

## ***Scene 5 – Baker Street, Midday, 1888***

(Two chairs are grouped around a table in proximity to a mantelpiece, a liquor cabinet, a window overlooking the street, and a settee – created from two other chairs. Offstage, opposite the apartment's entrance, are the bedrooms. Music 3 out. Holmes finally thrusts the sharp point home, presses down the tiny piston, and sinks back into his chair with a long sigh of satisfaction. Watson witnesses this performance with obvious irritation as he sits nursing his wounded leg and playing a game of solitaire.)

**Watson:** Which is it today, Holmes? Morphine or cocaine?

**Holmes:** It is cocaine, a seven-percent solution. Would you care to try it, doctor?

**Watson:** No, indeed. **(Scratching his leg.)** My constitution has not got over the Afghan campaign yet. I cannot afford to throw any extra strain upon it.

**Holmes:** **(Pointing at Watson's shoulder.)** Ah yes, the ubiquitous Jezail injury.

**(Watson shakes his head and pats his leg. Holmes drops his point to Watson's leg and chuckles.)**

**Holmes:** Perhaps you are right, Watson. I find it, however, so transcendently stimulating and clarifying to the mind that its secondary action is a matter of small moment.

**Watson:** But consider the cost! Your brain may, as you say, be roused and excited, but it is a pathological and morbid process, which involves increased tissue-change and may at last leave a permanent weakness. **(Returning to his playing cards.)** Surely the *game* is hardly worth the candle.

**Holmes:** I abhor the dull routine of existence. I crave mental exaltation. That is why I have chosen my own particular profession – or rather created it – for I am the only one in the world.

**Watson:** The world's only unofficial detective?

**Holmes:** The world's only unofficial *consulting* detective.

**Watson:** I stand corrected.

**Holmes:** I examine the data as an expert and pronounce a specialist's opinion. I claim no credit in such cases – my name figures in no newspaper. The work itself is my highest reward.

**Watson:** **(Aside)** More than once, during the years that I had lived with him in Baker Street, I had observed that a small vanity underlay my companion's quiet and didactic manner. I made no remark, however.

**Holmes:** Why, you have yourself had some experience of my methods of work in the Jefferson Hope case.

**Watson:** Yes, indeed. **(Aside)** I even embodied it in a small brochure with the somewhat fantastic title of *A Study in Scarlet*.

**Holmes:** I cannot congratulate you upon it.

**Watson:** I beg your pardon?

**Holmes:** **(Rising, and pacing.)** Detection is an exact science and, as such, should be treated in a cold and unemotional manner. You have attempted to tinge it with romanticism!

**Watson:** But the romance was there. I could not tamper with the facts.

**Holmes:** Hum. Some facts should be suppressed. You might just as well have worked an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid.

**(Holmes points out a playing card move to Watson as he passes by.)**

**Watson:** **(Seeing the move a second after Holmes.)** Have you any professional inquiry on foot at present?

**Holmes:** **(Picking up the cocaine vial as he passes by the mantelpiece.)** None, hence the cocaine.

**Watson:** Hum.

**Holmes:** **(Pacing the room with the vial in hand.)** My mind rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, and I can dispense then with artificial stimulants. **(Pointing out another playing card move as he passes by.)** Red six to black seven. What is the use of having powers, Doctor, when one has no field upon which to exert them? Crime is commonplace, existence is commonplace, and no qualities save those which are commonplace have any function upon earth.

**(Turning his back to Watson, Holmes sets the cocaine vial back upon the mantelpiece.)**

**Holmes:** (From memory.) Ten of diamonds to the jack of spades, freeing the queen to...

**(Watson opens his mouth to protest this intrusion upon his game when Mrs Hudson enters opposite the bedrooms bearing a calling card upon a brass salver. She knocks upon their door and enters the apartment.)**

**Holmes:** (Putting on his jacket.) Why, yes, Mrs Hudson?

**Hudson:** (Extending the salver.) A young lady for you, sir.

**Holmes:** (Reading the calling card from the salver.) Miss Mary Morstan. Hmm. Ask her to step in, Mrs Hudson.

**(Mrs Hudson curtsies and exits the apartment. Holmes closes the door behind her and pockets the calling card while Watson puts his jacket on and clears away the cards from the table. Mary Morstan enters the hallway outside the apartment. Mrs Hudson curtsies to Mary and gestures for her to proceed to the apartment door. Mrs Hudson exits.)**

**Holmes:** A shame, really. You were only eight moves from winning.

**(Before Watson can respond or Mary can knock at the door, Holmes steps aside and opens the door.)**

**Holmes:** (With a slight bow and inviting gesture.) Ah, Miss Morstan.

**(Watson turns to face Holmes when Mary's appearance strikes him. Music 4 in.)**

**Mary:** (With a curtsy.) Mr Holmes.

**(Mary enters with a firm step and an outward composure.)**

**Watson:** (Aside) Her expression was sweet and amiable.

**(Holmes closes the door behind Mary.)**

**Holmes:** This is my esteemed colleague and biographer, Doctor John Watson.

**Mary:** (With a curtsy.) Doctor Watson.

**Watson:** (Aside while bowing to Mary.) In an experience of women which extends over three separate continents...

**Holmes:** (Drawing up a chair for Mary.) Please take a seat.

**(Mary sits.)**

**Watson:** (Aside) I had never looked upon a face which gave a clearer promise of a refined and sensitive nature.

**(Music 4 out.)**

**Holmes:** (Sitting) Now then, how may I assist you, madam?

**Mary:** Mr Holmes, I can hardly imagine anything more utterly inexplicable than the situation in which I find myself.

**Holmes:** State your case.

**Watson:** (Heading toward the bedrooms.) You will, I am sure, excuse me.

**Mary:** (Holding up her gloved hand.) If your friend would be good enough to stop, he might be of inestimable service to me.

**(Music 5 in.)**

**Mary:** Briefly, the facts are these. My mother passed away shortly after my birth. And my father, who was senior captain of his regiment in the Andaman Islands, sent me to a boarding school, where I remained until I turned seventeen. That same year, my father obtained leave, came home to London, and at once telegraphed me to meet him at his hotel. I did so and waited there all day without news of him. That night, I reported his disappearance to the police, but... **(A choking sob.)** That was nearly ten years ago, and from that day to this, no word has ever been heard of my unfortunate father...

**Holmes:** Had he any friends in town?

**Mary:** Only one that I know of – Major Sholto. He and Papa were in command of the Andaman Islands Penitentiary. The Major had retired to London some little time before. I communicated with him, of course, but he did not even know that his brother officer was in England.

**(Music 5 out.)**

**Holmes:** A singular case.

**Mary:** I have not yet described to you the most singular part. About six years ago, there arrived through the post a small cardboard box addressed to me, which I found to contain a very large and lustrous pearl. **(Retrieving a small flat box from her jacket.)** Since then, every year upon the same date, there has always appeared a similar box containing a similar pearl without any clue as to the sender. **(Opening the box to show six pearls.)** You can see for yourself that they are very handsome.  
**(Holmes takes the box from Mary and passes it to Watson for examination.)**

**Holmes:** Your statement is most interesting. Has anything else occurred?  
**(Mary produces an envelope from her jacket and passes it to Holmes.)**

**Mary:** Yes, and no later than today. That is why I have come to you. This morning I received this letter.

**Holmes:** Thank you.  
**(Holmes opens the envelope and passes the letter within to Watson.)**

**Holmes:** Watson.  
**(Holmes inspects the envelope in the light of the window.)**

**Watson:** **(Reading)** Be at the third pillar from the left outside the Lyceum Theatre tonight at seven o'clock. If you are distrustful, bring two friends. Do not bring police. If you do, all will be in vain. Your unknown friend.  
**(Watson passes the letter back to Holmes.)**

**Watson:** Well, really. This is a very pretty little mystery!

**Holmes:** **(Without looking up at Mary as he places the letter back in the envelope.)** What do you intend to do, Miss Morstan?

**Mary:** That is exactly what I want to ask *you*.  
**(Holmes hands the letter back to Mary.)**

**Holmes:** Then we shall most certainly go – you and I and – yes, why, Doctor Watson is the very man.

**Mary:** **(To Watson.)** But would you come?

**Watson:** I shall be proud and happy if I can be of any service.

**Mary:** **(Rising to leave.)** You are both very kind.  
**(Holmes turns away from her perfunctorily and checks his watch as he crosses to the mantelpiece. Confused, Mary turns to Watson. Watson smiles apologetically for Holmes' behaviour, returns the small flat box to her, and escorts Mary to the door.)**

**Holmes:** **(With his back to them both, lighting his pipe using a long straw from the bin.)** It is only half past three. We shall look out for you at six. Au revoir then.  
**(Watson opens the door for her.)**

**Mary:** Thank you both. Au revoir.  
**(Mary puts away the box with a sigh of relief and exits. Watson closes the door behind her.)**

**Watson:** What a very attractive woman!

**Holmes:** **(Smoking his pipe.)** Is she? **(Turning to Watson.)** I did not observe.  
**(Indian music swells – Music 6 - in. Lights change. Holmes and Watson exit. Action is continuous.)**

## ***Scene 6 – Outside Fort Agra, Evening, 1857***

**(Small enters. Music 6 continues under dialogue.)**

**Small:** **(Aside)** Back before the Indian Rebellion of 1857, I was stationed as a guard at the old fort of Agra.

**(In the darkness, Mahomet and Abdullah enter. They stack chairs upon other chairs to form a column in the middle of the stage.)**

**Small:** **(Taking out a cheroot and searching his pockets for a match.)** There I was put in charge of guarding a small isolated door upon the southwest side of the building.

**(Small finds a wooden match and strikes it. Lights change. Mahomet and Abdullah stand on either side of the column of chairs.)**

**Small:** I had two Sikhs under my command. They could talk English pretty well, but I could get little out of them.

**(Abdullah grabs Small from behind, while Mahomet holds a great knife to his throat. Music 6 out.)**

**Mahomet:** I will plunge this knife into your throat if you move a step.

**Abdullah:** Listen to me, Sahib. You must either be with us now, or you must be silenced forever. Which is it to be – death or life?

**Small:** How can I decide? You have not told me what you want of me.

**Abdullah:** It is nothing against the fort. We only ask you to be rich.

**Small:** I am as ready to be rich as anyone...

**Mahomet:** You will swear, then, to raise no hand and speak no word against us, either now or afterwards?

**Small:** I will swear it.

**Mahomet:** Then my comrade and I will swear that you shall have a quarter of the treasure which shall be equally divided among the four of us.

**Small:** There are but three.

**Abdullah:** No! Dost Akbar, my brother, must have his share. **(Pointing offstage.)** Stand at the gate, Mahomet, and give notice of their coming.

**(Mahomet sheathes his knife and exits. Abdullah releases Small. Music 6 out.)**

**Small:** Who is coming? What treasure?

**Abdullah:** Harken to what I have to say. There is a merchant by the name of Achmet who brings with him the most precious stones and the choicest pearls. He has with him as traveling companion my brother Dost Akbar, who will lead him to this side gate. Here he will come presently, and after this night, the world shall know the merchant Achmet no more.

**(Mahomet enters.)**

**Mahomet:** They are coming!

**Abdullah:** Challenge him, Sahib, as is custom, but give him no cause for fear. Send him in with us, and we shall do the rest.

**(Abdullah and Mahomet step aside in wait. Achmet enters all aflutter. His head turns side to side like a mouse venturing out from his hole. Dost Akbar follows him, carrying a heavy iron box. Music 7 in.)**

**Small:** Who goes there?

**Dost:** Friends, Sahib.

**(Achmet chirrup with joy and runs to Small.)**

**Achmet:** Your protection, Sahib, your protection for the merchant Achmet. I seek the shelter of the fort at Agra.

**Small:** **(Pointing to Dost.)** What have you there?

**Achmet:** Only an old iron box that contains one or two little family matters which are of no value to but I.

**Small:** **(To Mahomet and Abdullah.)** Take him to the main guard.

**(Dost leads the way while Abdullah and Mahomet close in upon Achmet from each side. The three Sikhs march Achmet offstage.)**

**Small:** **(Aside)** Never was a man so compassed round with death.

**(Achmet screams from offstage. Small crosses toward the sound. Music 7 out. Action is continuous.)**

## ***Scene 7 – Lyceum Theatre, 1888 and Fort Agra, 1857***

**(Lights change. Dressed for the evening, Watson enters opposite Small.)**

**Watson:** **(Aside)** She must have felt some uneasiness, yet when we arrived at the Lyceum Theatre, Miss Morstan's self-control was perfect. **(Gesturing to the column of chairs.)** We awaited our rendezvous at the third pillar.

**(Holmes and Mary enter, also dressed for the evening, and join Watson. On the opposite side of the stage, Mahomet, Dost, and Abdullah enter and join Small. These two scenes play out simultaneously, separated by the column of chairs.)**

**Small:** (To Abdullah.) It's done?

**Holmes:** (To Mary.) What do you know of this Major Sholto?

**Abdullah:** (To Small.) Down one of the winding passageways.

**Mary:** (To Holmes.) He was evidently a very particular friend of Papa's.

**Mahomet:** (To Small.) We left Achmet the merchant there, covered over with loose bricks.

**Mary:** His letters were full of allusions to the Major and of Fort Agra.

**Dost:** (To Abdullah.) Now, to hide the treasure as well until we can divide it without fear of discovery.

**Mary:** By the way, I found this curious paper among Papa's belongings.

**(Mary produces the paper from inside her cloak as Small produces a scrap of paper from his pocket.)**

**Small:** (To the three Sikhs.) We should make careful note of the place.

**(Mary hands the paper to Holmes.)**

**Mary:** I thought you might care to see it.

**Holmes:** You are certainly a model client, Miss Morstan.

**(Holmes unfolds the paper and places it against one side of the column of chairs. Small unfolds his paper and lays it against the other side of the column of chairs. Taking a pencil from another pocket, he draws a plan of the fort.)**

**Holmes:** (Examining the document.) Let's see now. It is a paper of native Indian manufacture.

The diagram upon it appears to be a plan of a large building with numerous passageways.

**(Small draws an X to mark the spot of the buried treasure.)**

**Holmes:** At one point is a small cross.

**(Dost pulls out a knife.)**

**Holmes:** In the left-hand corner, there are four bloody thumbprints as though it were a pact.

**Dost:** Each must swear to always act for all so that none might take advantage.

**(Dost slices his thumb and passes the knife to the next man.)**

**Holmes:** Beside it is written, in very rough and coarse characters, **(reading)** Dost Akbar.

**Dost:** **(Holding his bloody thumb aloft.)** Dost Akbar.

**(Mahomet slices his thumb and passes the knife to the next man.)**

**Holmes:** **(Reading.)** Mahomet Singh.

**Mahomet:** **(Holding his bloody thumb aloft.)** Mahomet Singh.

**(Abdullah slices his thumb and passes the knife to the next man.)**

**Holmes:** **(Reading.)** Abdullah Khan.

**Abdullah:** **(Holding his bloody thumb aloft.)** Abdullah Khan.

**(Small slices his thumb.)**

**Holmes:** **(Reading.)** Jonathan Small.

**Small:** **(Holding his bloody thumb aloft.)** Jonathan Small.

**Holmes:** And then the words...

**(Holmes, Watson, and Mary read aloud together as Dost, Mahomet, Abdullah, and Small bow.)**

**All:** The Sign of Four.

**(Dost, Small, Mahomet, and Abdullah back away out of the light and exit. Lights change. Action is continuous.)**

## ***Scene 8 – Lyceum Theatre, Evening, 1888***

**(Holmes returns the paper to Mary.)**

**Holmes:** Preserve it carefully, Miss Morstan, for it is evidently a document of importance.

**(McMurdo enters.)**

**McMurdo:** Miss Morstan?

**Mary:** (**Pocketing the paper.**) I am Miss Morstan.

**(McMurdo casts his eyes upon Watson and Holmes.)**

**McMurdo:** You will excuse me, miss, but I was to ask you to give me your word that neither of your companions is a police officer.

**Mary:** These two gentlemen are my friends. I give you my word on that.

**McMurdo:** (**With growing suspicion.**) These two may be friends o' yours, and yet no friends o' the master's. I don't know none o' your friends.

**Holmes:** Oh, yes, you do, McMurdo. Don't you remember the amateur who fought three rounds with you on the night of your benefit four years back?

**McMurdo:** Not Mr Sherlock Holmes! God's truth! How could I have mistook you for a copper? If instead o' standin' there so quiet you had just stepped up and given me that cross-hit of yours under the jaw, I'd ha' known you without a question.

**(Holmes proceeds to do just that in jest, pulling his punch short at the last second. McMurdo laughs and follows up with a pulled punch or two of his own. Mary and Watson share a look of confusion.)**

**McMurdo:** Ah, you're one that has wasted your gifts, you have!

**(Holmes laughs as he dodges McMurdo's punches agilely and turns to Watson.)**

**Holmes:** You see, Watson, if all else fails me, I have still one profession open to me.

**(McMurdo grabs Holmes from behind in a friendly bear hug and lifts him off the ground.)**

**Holmes:** Our friend McMurdo won't delay our interview any longer, I am sure.

**(McMurdo sets Holmes down.)**

**McMurdo:** Very sorry, madame, but the master's orders were very strict. Had to be certain of your friends. Good, then. Come, we must go. The master awaits you.

**(Lights change. Indian music swells – Music 8 in. All exit. Action is continuous.)**

## ***Scene 9 – Andaman Islands Penal Colony 1877***

**(Small enters opposite. Music 8 out under dialogue.)**

**Small:** (**Aside, still smoking a cheroot.**) Not a word about the jewels came out at the trial. The murder of Achmet, the merchant, however, was clearly made out, and it was certain that the four of us must all have been concerned in it. The three Sikhs and I got penal servitude for life. Rather a queer position, eh? There we were all four in chains with precious little chance of ever getting out again while we each held a secret which might have put each of us in a palace if we could only have made use of it. (**Laughing maniacally.**) It might have driven me mad, but I was always a pretty stubborn one, so I just held on and bided my time.

**(Major Sholto and Captain Morstan enter.)**

**Sholto:** Look here, Small. After some discussion, Captain Morstan and I think this secret of yours is more a private concern, after all.

**Morstan:** Indeed, which of course you have the power of disposing of as you think best.

**Sholto:** We might be inclined to at least look into it if we could agree as to terms.

**Small:** Why, as to that, gentlemen, there is only one bargain which a man in my position can make. I shall want you to help me to my freedom, and to help my three companions to theirs. We shall then take you into partnership and give you a fifth share to divide between you.

**Sholto:** Hum! A fifth share! That is not very tempting.

**Small:** It would come to nearly fifty thousand apiece!

**Morstan:** But how can we gain your freedom? You know very well that you ask an impossibility.

**Small:** Nothing of the sort. The only bar to our escape is that we can get no boat fit for the voyage. Find us one, and you will have done your part of the bargain.

**Morstan:** If there were only one of you.

**Small:** None or all. We have sworn it. The four of us must always act together.

**Sholto:** You see, Morstan. Small is a man of his word. He does not flinch from his friends.

**Morstan:** It's a dirty business.

**Sholto:** Yet the money will save our commissions handsomely.  
**Morstan:** Well, Small, we must for our children, I suppose, try and meet you.  
**Sholto:** Tell *me* where the box is hid, and I shall go back to Agra in the monthly relief boat. When I find the box, I will send out a small yacht provisioned for a voyage to lie off Andaman Islands, to which you and your three cohorts can make your way. After a time, Captain Morstan then can apply for leave of absence and meet us all at Agra...  
**Morstan:** Where we can have a final division of the treasure. What do you think of that, Small?  
**(Music 9 in as Small takes a long draw on his cheroot...)**  
**Small:** I think I'll be needing to provide you gentlemen a map.  
**(They laugh and exit together. Lights change. Action is continuous.)**

### ***Scene 10 – Thaddeus Sholto's Apartment, Later, 1888***

**(McMurdo enters opposite, followed by Watson, Holmes, and Mary.)**

**McMurdo:** Master, your guests!

**(McMurdo bows to the guests and then places the four chairs face to face and side to side and exits.)**

**Music 9 out under dialogue.)**

**Holmes:** Well, this is a curious situation.

**Mary:** Indeed, driving to an unknown place, on an unknown errand.

**Watson:** **(Aside)** While we waited for the appearance of our host, I endeavoured to cheer and amuse Miss Morstan with reminiscences of my adventures in Afghanistan. **(To Mary.)** I told her one moving anecdote as to how a musket looked into my tent at the dead of night, and how I fired a double-barrelled tiger cub at it.

**(Confused, Mary looks to Holmes. Holmes shakes his head. Realising his error, Watson turns to the Audience and winces.)**

**Mary:** **(Changing the subject.)** It appears my invitation is either a complete hoax...

**Holmes:** Or else we have good reason to think that important issues might hang upon the outcome of our meeting.

**(A gong sounds. Thaddeus Sholto enters and poses grandly.)**

**Thaddeus:** **(In a thin, high voice as he bows to each of them.)** Your servant, Miss Morstan. Your servant, gentlemen. Pray step into my little sanctum – an oasis of art in the howling desert of south London.

**Mary:** I'm sorry, sir, but...

**(Thaddeus Sholto offers his hand to Mary.)**

**Thaddeus:** Mr Thaddeus Sholto, that is my name. You are Miss Morstan, of course. And these gentlemen?

**Mary:** This is Mr Sherlock Holmes...

**Thaddeus:** Oh.

**(Thaddeus goes to shake hands with Holmes.)**

**Mary:** And this, Doctor Watson.

**Thaddeus:** Oh!

**(Thaddeus shakes Watson's hand instead.)**

**Thaddeus:** A doctor, eh? Might I ask you later to check on my heart? The aortic I may rely upon, but I should value your opinion upon the mitral.

**Watson:** **(Revelling in the idolatry customarily reserved for his comrade.)** Certainly.

**Thaddeus:** One can never be too cautious about such things. **(In an offhanded manner.)** Had your father, Miss Morstan, refrained from throwing a strain upon his heart, he might have been alive now.

**(Mary feels faint. Watson passes her his handkerchief.)**

**Mary:** I knew in my heart that he was dead.

**Thaddeus:** Oh, my dear! I can give you every information, and, what is more, I can do you justice, and I will, too. Whatever my brother Bartholomew may say, we *can* settle everything satisfactorily among ourselves without any police interference. Nothing would annoy Bartholomew more than publicity, and there is nothing more unaesthetic than a policeman.

**Holmes:** For my part, whatever you may choose to say will go no further.

**(Watson looks to Mary, and then they both nod to Thaddeus in agreement.)**

**Thaddeus:** That is well! That is well. Please!

**(Thaddeus Sholto gestures for the others to follow him, glides around to the four chairs, and gestures for the others to sit on the floor in a semicircle before him as he sits astride the only available chairs like a sultan.)**

**Thaddeus:** Sit.

**(Holmes, Watson, and Mary sit in various attitudes of comfort upon the floor. Thaddeus applies a taper to the great bowl of his hookah, causing the smoke to bubble through the rose-water.)**

**Thaddeus:** I trust that you have no objection to the balsamic odour of eastern tobacco. I am a little nervous, and I find my hookah an invaluable sedative.

**(Thaddeus pauses to puff on his hookah.)**

**Mary:** You will excuse me, Mr Sholto, but it is very late, and I should desire the interview to be as short as possible.

**Thaddeus:** **(Blowing smoke rings.)** At the best, it must take some time, for we shall certainly have to go to Norwood and see brother Bartholomew at Pondicherry Lodge.

**Watson:** It would perhaps be as well to start at once, then.

**Thaddeus:** **(Laughing)** That would hardly do. No, no, no. I must prepare you for the meeting.

**(Music 10 in.)**

**Thaddeus:** My father was, as you may have guessed, Major John Sholto. He retired from the Indian army some eleven years ago and came to live at Pondicherry Lodge in Upper Norwood. Six years ago, early in 1882, he received a letter from India, and from that day he sickened to his death.

**(Thaddeus Sholto inhales too deeply from his hookah and breaks into a coughing fit. Lights change. Action is continuous.)**

### ***Scene 11 – Pondicherry Lodge, 1882 and Thaddeus Sholto's Apartment, 1888***

**(Thaddeus Sholto turns and rests against the back of one pair of chairs and kicks his feet up onto the other pair as if lying on his death bed. He now speaks as the father, Major Sholto. Music 10 continues under dialogue.)**

**Sholto:** **(In a voice broken by emotion, pain, and age.)** Come, my sons. Ah! Lock the door behind you, lads. **(Grasping each of his son's hands as he turns from one to the next.)** Thaddeus, Bartholomew, I have only one thing which weighs upon my mind at this supreme moment. It is my treatment of poor Captain Morstan's orphan, Mary. My cursed greed has withheld from her the treasure, half at least of which should have been hers. So blind and foolish a thing is avarice. **(Producing a pearl necklace from his robe pocket.)** See this string of pearls. Even these I could not bear to part with, although I had got them out with the intent of sending them to her. You, my sons, will give her a fair share of the Agra treasure. But send her nothing until I am gone. **(With a laugh.)** After all, men have been as sick as this and have recovered.

**(Captain Morstan enters unnoticed in the darkness. A pool of light reveals him standing at attention.)**

**Sholto:** **(His laughter turning into an ailing cough.)** Captain Morstan, her father, and I came into possession of a considerable treasure from our days serving together in the Andaman Islands. I brought it over to England, and he got leave and came straight over to claim his share. Upon discussing the division of the treasure, we came to heated words. Morstan sprang out of his chair in a paroxysm of anger, then suddenly pressed his hand to his side and fell to the floor. When I stooped over him, I found – to my horror – that he was dead.