Meet Sherlock Holmes

An Original Adaptation with Script and Theme Music by WAYNE ROBERT SCOTT

Based Upon the Classic Detective Series And Incidents From “A Study in Scarlet” (1887) and “The Sign of Four” (1980) And the Stories, “The Red-Headed League” (1891) and “The Norwood Builder” (1903) by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

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CAST OF CHARACTERS
(In Order of Appearance)

Sherlock Holmes       Private Consulting Detective
Dr. John H. Watson    Holmes; Friend and Chronicler
Mrs. Hudson           Baker Street Landlady
Stamford              Medical Acquaintance of Dr. Watson
Messenger             Retired Naval Sergeant
Inspector Lestrade    of Scotland Yard
Constable Gregson     Works with Lestrade
E. J. Drebber         Murder Victim
Jabez Wilson          Portly, Red-headed Pawnbroker
Vincent Spaulding     Employee of Wilson’s
Duncan Ross           League Administrator
Mr. Merryweather      Bank Director
John Hector McFarlane A Young Lawyer
Jonas Oldacre         Architect and Builder of Norwood
Miss Lexington        Oldacre’s Housekeeper
Mrs. McFarlane        John’s Mother
ACT I

Overture ("Theme for ‘Sherlock Holmes’")

(As ‘Overture transitions to strains of a violin solo, Holmes is seen silhouetted, back to audience, playing the violin in his Baker Street study. Below, in audience area, Dr. Watson enters from opposite the study carrying his tattered medical bag. Mrs. Hudson simultaneously crosses through the study, acknowledges Holmes, and departs through study exterior door leading to “street” audience area, where she meets Watson, at center, amidst various Londoners who occasionally walk by. As the opening dialogue ensues, Holmes stops playing his violin in tandem with the conclusion of the violin solo and, in very dim lighting, dons a lab coat and quietly fusses with various chemical samples at a table littered with assorted books and experimental equipment. He occasionally peers into a microscope)

(Musical underscore continues)

SCENE 1: BAKER STREET, LONDON

Watson Ah, good morning, Mrs. Hudson.
Hudson And good morning to you, Doctor Watson. You’re out and about rather early today.
Watson Oh, I told the widow, Mrs. Cubitt, that I would see how she was faring. She’s much improved, I’m happy to report.
Hudson Humphf! Well, what with your comings and goings— (Motions to Holmes, behind her)— and his comings and goings, it’s a wonder either of you two have need of my lodgings at all!
Watson Well, we have to sleep somewhere, after all.
Hudson Humphf! I don’t know when! Up at all hours, you are! What with clients, and inspectors dropping in, and all sorts of strange chemical experiments and— and— of course that violin playing at the drop of a hat at anytime of the day or night, and—
Watson The violin! Ah, yes! A rather sweet sound today.
Hudson He must be in a good mood.
Watson A very good sign, indeed. More than likely, he has just arrived at some solution or other…
Hudson Humphf! Well, you know him best. Lord knows, I’ll never understand him! But he is a brilliant gentleman, that he is. A bit eccentric but, mind you, he pays the rent on time, that he does. And as long as he does, he can jolly well stand on his head while playin’ a piccolo for all I care! (Listening) And… he does have a way with music… that he does…
Watson I don’t believe I’ve heard him play so blithely since… well— since that first, fateful day I ever met him…
Hudson Humphf! Well, I’ll wager no one ever forgets the day they first meet— Sherlock Holmes!…
Watson (Lost in thought) No indeed… (He thinks reflectively as his thoughts are heard)
Hudson Humphf! Good day to you, Doctor Watson… (Exiting) Good day to you…
Watson’s Voice Hmm. How well I remember the day I first met him. Well, in fact… it all began as I was standing… well, right here… holding this very bag— my only possession at the time, broken down as it was. And is!… I was looking for some reasonably inexpensive place to live when I despaired to realize there was nothing here on Baker Street I could afford on my military pension. At least, not on my own. I was just about to walk to the low rent district when, quite unexpectedly, I was spotted by an old acquaintance…

Stamford (Calling from audience and running to Watson) Watson!… Watson!…
Watson Stamford? Stamford— ! Is it really you?
Stamford (Hugging Watson) In the flesh! After all these years! Good heavens! I haven’t seen you since our staff surgeon days at Saint Bartholomew’s… You haven’t changed…
Watson And neither have you.
Stamford Hmm. We’re both liars!... (They laugh) Whatever have you been doing with yourself, Watson?
You’re as thin as a broomstick and as tanned as a chestnut!
Watson Well, I enlisted…
Stamford The army?
Watson Would you believe it? I was duly attached to the Sixty-sixth Berkshires as an assistant surgeon, just as the second Afghan War had broken out.
Stamford No!
(Music fades)
Watson Quite so. In fact, we fought hard in the Battle of Maiwand. A bloody battle, that one! I took a bullet in the shoulder and, wouldn’t you know— contracted enteric fever, that curse of our Indian colonies.
Stamford Good heavens!
Watson I nearly died. I was promptly dispatched to England and thus ended my illustrious military career! I have neither kith nor kin here and so here I am, as free as air— or as free as a government pension of eleven shillings and sixpence a day will permit a man to be! I have just now arrived here in London— this great cesspool into which all the lazy loungers and loafers of the Empire like myself are inevitably drawn. And at the very moment you spotted me, I was trying to decipher how I might share lodgings with someone so I could live reasonably within my means.
Stamford That’s a strange thing! You are the second man today who has used that expression to me.
Watson Oh? And who was the first?
Stamford Well, this fellow I met at the chemical lab in the hospital where I work. A singular fellow— quite unforgettable, in fact. Early this morning he was bemoaning the fact that he could not get someone to go halves with him in some nice rooms which he had found and which were too much for his purse.
Watson Well! If he really wants someone to share the rooms and the expense, then I am just the very man for him. I should prefer having a partner to being alone, at any rate.
Stamford Hmm. Well— you do not know Sherlock Holmes yet, Er— you— may not care for him as a constant companion.
Watson Why not? What is there against him?
Stamford Oh, I didn’t say there was anything against him. He’s just a little— er— strange in his ideas— an enthusiast, I gather, in some branches of science. As far as I know, he is a decent fellow.
Watson A medical student?
Stamford No— I don’t think so. I have no idea what he intends to go in for. He is well up on anatomy and chemistry, but I don’t think he’s taken any formal medical classes. And yet— he has amassed huge sums of unusual, out-of-the-way knowledge which would astound any professor.
Watson Really?...
Stamford Heaven only knows what the true object of his work is.
Watson Have you never asked him what he’s up to?
Stamford (Laughing) Oh, no. He’s not easy to draw out. Yet— he can be quite talkative when the mood seizes him. He’s rather a man of contradictions.
Watson Well— even so— I should like to meet him. If he’s studious and keeps to himself, so much the better. I’m not strong enough yet to stand much noise or excitement. I had enough in Afghanistan to last me the rest of my life. How may I meet this acquaintance of yours?
Stamford Er— well now. You mustn’t blame me if you don’t get on with him. I only know him from when he comes to the lab from time to time. Er— you proposed this arrangement, so you mustn’t hold me responsible.
Watson Now, see here, Stamford. It seems to me, all of a sudden, you’re eager to wash your hands of this matter. Is this fellow Sherlock Holmes some sort of disagreeable tyrant—?
Stamford Er— no, no—
Watson An ax murderer?
Stamford No, no. (Continues to shake his head to Watson’s questions)
Watson Well, is he allergic?... Asthmatic?... Bronchitic?...Paraplegic?!...
Stamford No, no...
Watson Well, what is it? And don’t be mealy-mouthed about it.
Stamford It is not easy to express the inexpressible. He’s simply— passionate... But in any case, it’s best for you to form your own impressions about him...
SCENE 2: THE STUDY OF 221 B BAKER STREET

Holmes  (With much energy and at a brisk pace) Aha! I’ve found it! I’ve found it! Yes! (Jumping at the men, test-tube in hand) I have found a re-agent which is precipitated by hemoglobin, and by nothing else!

Stamford  Doctor Watson—Mister Sherlock Holmes.

Holmes  (Vigorously shaking Watson’s hand) How are you? You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive.

Watson  How on earth did you know that?

Holmes  Oh, never mind. What’s important at the moment is this matter of the hemoglobin! No doubt, you see the significance of this discovery of mine…

Watson  It is interesting, chemically, no doubt. But practically—?

Holmes  Why—man, this is the most practical medico-legal discovery in years. Perhaps of the nineteenth century! Don’t you see that it gives us an infallible test for blood stains? Come over here now and lend me a hand, won’t you? (He pulls Watson toward a table with apparatus)

Watson  If I can… what may I do?

Holmes  (Grabbing Watson’s right hand) Lend me your hand! (Poking Watson’s finger with a pin) Ah!

Watson  Ow!

Holmes  Let us have some fresh blood! I’m weary from staring at my own blood all day. Now, I add this small quantity of your blood to a liter of water. You perceive that the resulting mixture has the appearance of pure water. The proportion of blood cannot be more than one in a million. I have no doubt, however, that we shall soon be able to obtain the characteristic reaction. (Throwing crystals into water and adding fluid from a dropper) Ah ha! Ha ha ha!… (Holmes laughs and engages Watson in a jig about the study as Stamford stares in astonishment; the chemical reaction produces a smoky cloud)

(Music fades)

Holmes  Ha!… Well! What do you think of that?!

Watson  It seems to be a most delicate test of some sort.

Holmes  It’s a beautiful thing is what it is! The old guaiacum test was quite clumsy and uncertain. So is the microscopic examination for blood corpuscles. Indefinite, at best. And a microscope is worthless if the stains are a few hours old. Now, this appears to detect the presence of blood, old or new! Had this test been invented, there are hundreds of villains now walking the earth who would long ago have paid the penalty of their crimes!

Watson  Indeed!

Holmes  Think of it! Criminal cases continually hinge upon one point. A man is suspected of a crime perhaps months after it has been committed. (Splotching Watson’s vest with various stains) His whole case may depend on a stain! But what kind of stain?! Are they blood stains, or mud stains, or rust stains, or fruit stains, or what are they? Experts have been baffled for eons. And why? Because there was no reliable test! Now we have the Sherlock Holmes test. And so, of course, there will no longer be any difficulty.

Watson  You are to be congratulated.

Holmes  There was the case of Von Bischoff at Frankford last year. He would certainly have been hung had this test been in existence. Then there was Mason of Bradford, and the Notorious Muller, and Samson of New Orleans—Ha! It would have been the gallows for all of them!

Stamford  You seem to be a walking calendar of crime. You might start a paper along these lines. Call it “The Police News of the Past.”
Holmes: And interesting reading it would be indeed. *(Checking pin used on Watson)* Oh, I do hope I remembered to sterilize this pin, dear fellow.

Watson: I say—!

Holmes: *(Staring at his own finger in horror)* I’m sure I did. I have to be careful, for I dabble with all sorts of poisons.

Watson: *(Seeking to divert the focus of this awkward moment)* Oh?—we came here on a bit of business. Er—my old friend here needs lodgings and, as you complained you could get no one to go in with you on this fine place, I thought perhaps I should bring you together.

Holmes: *(Shaking Watson’s sore hand vigorously)* I’m delighted… delighted! Provided you engage in no—peculiar habits.

Watson: None more peculiar than—er—none I can think of.

Holmes: Splendid… splendid. As for me—it may come as a surprise—I—do have perhaps a vice or two… My chemicals, my clients. My moods… and, oh yes… my violin. *(Picking up violin)* I hope you won’t object to it’s occasional sweet strains…

Watson: I suppose it depends upon the player.

Holmes: *(With a pause and a knowing look)* Then, I think we may consider the matter—settled. Welcome to 221 B Baker Street… *(He begins playing his violin and staring dreamily into space)*

(Scene begins with music)

Stamford: *(In low tones, to Watson)* If I am not very much mistaken, I do believe you just committed yourself to 221 B…and all its contents.

Watson: Yes… I believe I have. *(Following Stamford to exterior door)* But… but… how in God’s name did he know I had come from Afghanistan?

Stamford: *(Going through door, stopping at step)* That’s just his little peculiarity. A good many people have wanted to know how he finds things out.

Watson: *(Following him)* Oh! A mystery, is it? Well, perhaps this will be a pleasant diversion for my convalescence, eh? As Pope said, “The proper study of mankind is man.” *(Music transitions from violin solo to fuller instrumental rendition of theme)*

Stamford: He’ll make an interesting study, all right. But I’ll wager he learns more about you than you about him! Good-bye Watson… And, by all means…good luck! *(Stamford exits through the audience)*

SCENE 3: THE STUDY AND BAKER STREET, LONDON

Watson: As I began to settle down and become accustomed to my new surroundings. I found Holmes to be a man of regular habits… Sometime he would work with his chemicals or venture out to the laboratories of various hospitals. At other times, he would go out on long walks, reflecting upon something or other. From time to time, I perceived he was out on some strange business or mysterious errand. The way he looked when he returned from such excursions led me to think he may have walked clear to the lowest portions of the city. Nothing could exceed his energy when a working fit was upon him… But now and then, a reaction would seize him and, on some days, he would sit in his chair for hours on end, deep in thought. You might think me a bit of a busybody, but as the weeks went by, my interest in him and my curiosity as to his aims in life gradually increased. Perhaps I may be forgiven when one realizes how little there was to occupy my own attention. Just when I began to think that my companion was as friendless a man as I was, I soon discovered he had a great many acquaintances from all walks and classes of society. Young and old, rich and poor, they would come with the apparent object of consulting with him in some fashion. He would beg my indulgence, ask my forgiveness for inconveniencing me, and usher me out so he could converse with those whom he called “clients.” My delicacy prevented me from asking him directly what it is that engaged his attention so. But I was to discover the true nature of his work and the object of his life sooner than I expected. As I waited for his latest visitor to depart, I whiled away the time reading one of his periodicals—and would most certainly have died of boredom if it weren’t for the fact the article I read made me so angry.
(Music ends)

Watson  (As Holmes shows out his last visitor) What ridiculous twaddle!  (Slapping periodical) I have never read such rubbish in all my life!

Holmes  What is it?

Watson  Why, this article.  I see that you have read it since you have marked it.  I don’t deny that it is cleverly written.  But it irritates me!  Listen to this.  (Reading) “Like all other arts, the Science of Deduction and Analysis is one which can only be acquired by long and patient study.  But such study is amply rewarded when the art is mastered.  Upon meeting a fellow mortal, one may learn at a glance the history of the man and tell what his trade of profession is.  Through systematic observation, one learns where to look and what to look for.  By a man’s fingernails, by his coat sleeve, by his boots, by his trouser-knees, by calluses of his forefinger and thumb, by his skin, by his expression, by his shirt-cuffs,… by each of these things a man’s life and his calling is plainly revealed.”  Ha!  That’s a good one!  Evidently the theory of some lazy loafer lounging in an armchair, evolving all these neat little notions in the cocoon of his own study.  It is not practical.  It is not possible!  I should like to see this armchair theorist handcuffed in the third-class carriage on the train and forced to reveal the occupations of all his fellow-travelers.  I would lay a thousand to one against him!

Holmes  And you would lose your money.

Watson  What?

Holmes  As for the article— I wrote it myself.

Watson  You?!!

Holmes  And, to my way of thinking, the principles I have systematically outlined are as obvious as the fact that the sun revolves about the earth.

Watson  (Stunned) Er— but it doesn’t… The earth revolves around the sun.

Holmes  Oh?

Watson  You didn’t know?  Surely every person of the nineteenth century knows—

Holmes  (Laughing) You’re astonished.  Well, not that I do know it, I shall do my best to forget it!

Watson  To forget it?!!

Holmes  You see, Watson, I consider that a man’s brain as originally created by our Creator is like a little empty attic—and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose.  A fool takes in all the lumber of every sort that he comes across, so that the knowledge which might be useful to him gets crowded out, or at best, is jumbled up with a lot of other things, so that he has difficulty in laying his hands upon it.  Now the skillful workman is very careful indeed as to what he takes into his brain-attic.  He will have nothing but the tools which may help him in doing his work—but of these tools, he has a large assortment and all in the most perfect working order.  It is a mistake to think the brain-attic has elastic walls.  It is of the highest importance, therefore, not to have useless facts elbow out the useful ones.

Watson  But the Solar System!

Holmes  And what is the silly Solar System to me?  You say we go around the sun.  If we went around the moon, it wouldn’t make a tuppence worth of difference to me or to my work.  And my work consists solely of observation, analysis, and deduction.  The theories I have expressed in that article, which you find so laughable, are, in fact, extremely practical.  So practical—I depend upon them for my bread and cheese.

Watson  But how?

Holmes  Well, I have a trade of my own.  I suppose I am the only one in the world at present.  I’m what you might call a consulting detective.  Here in London we have lots of government detectives and plenty of private ones.  When these fellows are at a loss, they come to me and I manage to put them on the right scent.  They lay all the evidence before me and I am generally able—with the help of my knowledge of the history of crime—to set them straight.  There is a strong family resemblance about misdeeds and if you have all the details of a thousand at your fingertips, it is odd if you cannot unravel the thousand and first.  Take the well-known detective, Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard.  He got himself into a fog recently over a forgery case, and that is what brought him here.

Watson  And the other people who have come?

Holmes  They are all people who are in trouble about something and want a little enlightenment.  I listen to their story, they listen to my comments, and then I pocket my fee.
Watson But do you mean to say that without leaving this room, you can unravel some knot which other men can make nothing of—even though they have seen every detail for themselves?

Holmes Quite so. I have a kind of intuition that way. Now and again a more complex case turns up and then I have to bustle about and see things with my own eyes. Observation with me is second nature. You appeared to be surprised when I told you, on our first meeting, that you had come from Afghanistan.

Watson You were told, no doubt.

Holmes Nothing of the sort. I knew you came from Afghanistan. From long habit, the train of thoughts ran so swiftly through my mind that I arrived at the conclusion without being conscious of intermediate steps. There were such steps, however. The train of reasoning ran: here is a gentleman with a medical bag, but with the disciplined stride of a military man used to marching. Clearly an army doctor, then. He has just come from the tropics, for his face is dark, and that is not the natural tint of his skin, for his wrists are fair. He has undergone hardship and sickness, as his haggard face and tired eyes revealed clearly. His left arm has been injured, for he holds it in a still and unnatural manner. Where in the tropics could an English army doctor have seen much hardship and got his arm wounded? Why, the recent and well-known Battle of Maiwand. Clearly, you came from Afghanistan. The whole train of thought did not occupy a second. I then remarked you came from Afghanistan and you were astonished.

Watson It is, indeed, amazingly simple enough as you explain it.

Holmes Indeed.

Watson You remind me of Edgar Allan Poe’s Detective Dupin. I had no idea such individuals existed beyond stories.

Holmes I’m sure you meant that as a compliment—and I thank you. But Detective Dupin is a dolt. He is by no means the phenomenon that Poe imagines him to be… (Holmes picks up a book, thumbing through it)

Watson’s Voice (As Watson reflects) This fellow may be very clever. But he is certainly very conceited! I looked out the window, feeling indignant at having a fictional character I admired treated so derogatorily. I was rather annoyed at him now and was about to change the subject, when he seemed to read my mind.

Holmes But I am in a dreadful mood. Please forgive me, my friend. It’s simply that—just now there has been very little crime to detect—or, at most—some bungling villainy with a motive so transparent that even Scotland Yard official can see through it. So, I am a bit at loose ends….

(Watson’s Voice) (As the Sergeant asks for directions for a passerby, we hear:) This fellow may be very clever. But he is certainly very conceited! I looked out the window, feeling indignant at having a fictional character I admired treated so derogatorily. I was rather annoyed at him now and was about to change the subject, when he seemed to read my mind.

Holmes You mean that retired sergeant of Marines?

Watson You mean that retired sergeant of Marines?

Holmes (As the Sergeant asks for directions for a passerby, we hear:) Now how does he know that? Sergeant of Marines… Brag and bounce! Holmes knows I cannot verify his guess. And it must be a guess—he hasn’t even spoken to the man! This thought hardly passed through my mind, when the man we were watching spotted the number on our door and headed our way… (Messenger knocks)

Holmes Come in…

Messenger (Entering) Message for Mister Sherlock Holmes…

Holmes For me, thank you. (Holmes takes message and becomes absorbed reading it)

Medic (About to leave) Good day to you both…

Watson Ahh—just a moment. May I ask, sir, what your former occupation was…

Medic Well, if you must know—I was a sergeant, sir. Royal Marine Light Infantry. (Saluting) Good day, now… (He exits)

(Holmes and Watson exchange glances, then Holmes continues reading message)

Watson How in the world did you deduce that? How did you know he was a Marine Sergeant?

Holmes (Reading) We don’t have time for… (Looking up) Er—forgive me. You break the thread of my thoughts, but perhaps it is just as well. (Putting on hat and coat) So you were not able to see that the man was a Marine Sergeant?

Watson No, indeed.

Holmes It was easier to know it than to explain why I know it. You might be a little troubled to prove how it is that two and two make four—and yet you are quite sure of the fact. Even at a distance, I could see a great blue anchor tattooed on the back of the fellow’s hand. That smacked of the sea. He had that military walk I observed in you and the regulation side whiskers. There we have the
marine. He had the air of self-importance. Certainly you saw how he swung his cane. And he was middle-aged. All facts which suggested he had been a sergeant.

(Music begins)

Watson Amazing.
Holmes Elementary. Now get your hat.
Watson (Taking hat) You want me to go with you?
Holmes Yes. If you have nothing better to do. I said just now that there were no criminals. It appears that I am wrong. Have a look at this message while we make our way to Lauriston Gardens, off the Brixton Road…
(Watson takes message and “reads” as he and Holmes walk through audience area)

SCENE 4: BAKER STREET TO BRIXTON ROAD, LONDON

Watson’s Voice The message appeared to be from Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard…
Lestrade’s Voice “My dear Mister Sherlock Holmes. There has been a bad business during the night at Number Three Lauriston Gardens, off the Brixton Road. Early this morning Constable Gregson discovered the door of this unoccupied house wide open and, while investigating, discovered the body of a gentleman inside. Through a series of inquiries, we have been able to take into temporary custody three possible suspects, none of whom will admit to anything. There is blood in the room, but no wound upon the deceased. We are at a loss as to how this man died and unable to tie one of the suspects, all of whom were seen in the vicinity to this crime. I have left everything in status quo until I hear from you and would esteem it a great kindness if you would favor me with your opinion. Yours truly, Inspector George Lestrade…”
(Watson hands message back to Holmes as they complete their walk)

Holmes Lestrade and his associate, Gregson, are among the smarter of the Scotland Yarders. In a manner of speaking, you might say they are the pick of a bad lot.
Watson Have you formed any opinions about this case?
Holmes (Approaching center stage area, with Watson) Not enough data. It is a capital mistake to theorize before you have all the evidence. It biases the judgment.
Watson Well, you’ll have your data soon enough. This is Brixton Road and I believe that is the house.
(They pause as Holmes does what Watson’s voice describes)

Watson’s Voice I thought that Holmes would have rushed into the house and plunged into the mystery, but nothing was further from his intention. With an air of nonchalance which, under the circumstances, seemed to me to border on affectation, he lounged up and down the pavement and gazed vacantly at the ground, the sky, the opposite houses and the line of steps. Twice he stopped and once I saw him smile and utter a simple exclamation of satisfaction…

Holmes Hmmm… ha!
Watson’s Voice There were many marks of footsteps on the wet, clayey soil, but since the police had been coming and going over it, I was unable to see how my companion could hope to learn anything from it. Still, I now had little doubt that he could perceive a great deal which was hidden from me.
(Music ends)

Lestrade (Who has been walking about, with Gregson) Ah! It is indeed kind of you to come, Mister Holmes. I have left everything untouched.

Holmes (Pointing at pathway) Except that! If a herd of buffaloes had passed along here, there could not be a greater mess.

Lestrade Er— well, now. I’ve had a lot to do inside the house. (Snidely) I was relying upon my colleague, Constable Gregson, to look after this.

Gregson Er— sorry.
Holmes  Well, with two of Scotland Yard’s finest on the premises, there will not be much for a third party to discover.
Lestrade  Well, I think we’ve done all that could be done. It’s a puzzling case, though, and I know your interest in such things.
Holmes  Umm hmm. My associate, Doctor Watson. (All nod) Tell me, did you arrive in a cab?
Lestrade  No sir.
Holmes  Then let us look at the room…

SCENE 5: NUMBER THREE, LAURISTON GARDENS, BRIXTON ROAD

Watson’s Voice  My attention was immediately centered upon the single, grim, motionless figure which lay stretched upon the boards. His hands were clenched and his lower limbs were interlocked. The look on his face was a grim contortion — as though his death struggle had been a grievous one. I have seen death in many forms, but never has it appeared to me in a more singular, fearsome way than in that dark, grimy room…

(Holmes bends over body)
Gregson  It beats anything I have ever seen and I am no chicken.
Lestrade  You found no clues?
Gregson  None at all.
Lestrade  There you have it, Mister Holmes.
Holmes  You are sure that there is no wound?
Gregson  Positive.
Lestrade  Positive.
Holmes  (Looking at floor, near body) Then, of course, this blood belongs to a second individual — presumably the murderer, if murder has been committed. It reminds me of the circumstances surrounding the death of Van Jansen, in Utrecht, in the year ’34. Do you remember the case?…

(Gregson shakes head “no” as Lestrade scratches head)
Holmes  Read up on it. You really should. As wise King Solomon said in the Book of Books, “there is nothing new under the sun.” It has all been done before.

(Holmes performs what Watson describes)
Watson’s Voice  As he spoke, his nimble fingers were flying here, there and everywhere — feeling, pressing, unbuttoning, examining — while his eyes wore that faraway look I had already seen. Finally, he sniffed the dead man’s lips and then glanced at the soles of his patent leather boots.
Holmes  He has not been moved at all?
Lestrade  No more than has been necessary for our examination. (He wanders to corner)
Holmes  And his pockets. What did you find there?
Gregson  (Fingering items) A gold watch by Bauraud of London. And eighteen pounds, eleven in loose money. Oh, and a couple of his calling cards. “E. J. Drebber.”
Lestrade  Hallo! I have just made a discovery of the highest importance — and one which would have been overlooked had I not made a careful inspection — of the walls. Have a look at this. (As the men join him, he strikes a match) Here… Ha! Look at that!
Watson’s Voice  Across a bare space of coarse plastering we saw a single word scrawled in blood-red letters. R-A-C-H-E.

Lestrade  (Pompously) Well now, what do we make of that? Perhaps I can tell you. This was overlooked because it was in the darkest corner of the room, and — (Scowling at Gregson). . . no one thought of looking there. The murderer has written it with his or her own blood. See this smear where it has trickled down the wall? That disposies of the idea of suicide, anyhow. And why was it written
here? I will tell you. See what’s left of the candle here? It was lit at the time and if it was lit, this would have been the brightest part of the room instead of the darkest.

Gregson (Dismayed) and what does R-A-C-H-E mean now that you have found it?

Lestrade Mean? Why, it means that the writer was going to put the female name R-A-C-H-E-L; Rachel—but was disturbed before he or she had time to finish.

(Holmes smiles)

Lestrade You mark my words—when this case is cleared, you’ll find a woman named Rachel is somewhere in the middle of it. It’s all very well for you to chuckle, Mister Holmes. You’re very smart and clever, but the old bloodhound is best, when all is said and done.

Holmes I do indeed congratulate you, Lestrade, upon being the first of us to discover this writing. It bears every mark of having been written by the participant in last night’s mystery. Did your message say you had detained three suspects?

Lestrade Indeed we have. And one of them is bound to know this Rachel. We’ll flush ‘em out! Would you care to interview them, Mister Holmes?

Holmes That won’t be necessary.

Lestrade Oh?

Holmes I have not had an opportunity to examine this room yet, but, with your permission, I shall do so now… (He proceeds as according to Watson’s narrative)

Lestrade By all means.

(Music begins)

Watson’s Voice He whipped a tape measure and a large round magnifying glass from his pocket. With these two implements, he trotted about the room, sometimes stopping, occasionally kneeling, and once lying flat upon his face. So engrossed was he with his occupation, that he appeared to have forgotten our presence— for he muttered under his breath the whole time, occasionally grunting, whistling, and uttering little cries suggestive of encouragement. As I watched him, I was reminded of a pure-bred, well-trained foxhound as it catches the scent. He measured the distances between marks invisible to me, and occasionally applying his tape to the walls in an equally incomprehensible manner. In one place, he carefully gathered up a little pile of grey dust from the floor and placed it in an envelope. Finally, he examined every letter on the wall with his glass and seemed quite exacting about it. When this was done, he seemed satisfied…

(Music continues, muted)

Holmes They say that “genius” is simply an infinite capacity for taking pains. It’s an incomplete definition, but it does apply to detective work.

Lestrade And what have your great pains caused you to make of the case?

Gregson Yes. What do you think?

Holmes (With a hint of sarcasm) Oh, I don’t know… It would be robbing you of the credit for the case if I presumed to help you and offer my meddlesome observations. You are doing so well now, it would be a pity for anyone to interfere. Do let me know how your investigation goes and I shall be happy to give you any help that I can. Come along, Watson… Oh, by the way, Inspector… is one of the suspects in your custody German speaking?

Lestrade Now, how in the world did you know that?

Holmes Then you may well be on the right track. Let’s go, Watson…

Lestrade But… but, Mister Holmes… Is there nothing else you would say?...

Holmes Oh. Well. Since you asked, I may have an observation of two that should prove helpful… There has been a murder committed—a premeditated crime of passion—and the murderer was a man, fluent in German. He was more than six feet tall, was in the prime of his life, had small feet for his height, wore coarse, square-toed boots and smoked a Trichinopoly cigar. He came here with his victim in a four-wheeled cab which was drawn by a horse with three old shoes and one new
one on his right foreleg. The fingernails of his right hand were unusually long… Does this bear any resemblance to one of your suspects?

L & G
(Together) Ludwig Hoffman! But—

Holmes
(Pointing to body) This man has been poisoned… oh, and by the way, Lestrade… R-A-C-H-E is “Rache,” which is the German word for “revenge.” So don’t waste any time looking for some Miss Rachel. Confront your prime suspect with the facts I have given you and, I suspect, a confession will be forthcoming. Should you need any more ammunition or verification of the facts I have presented, you know where I am. Good day. Come along, Watson…

(Music rises briefly, then fades)

(Holmes and Watson leave Lestrade and Gregson in open-mouthed amazement)

SCENE 6: BRIXTON ROAD TO BAKER STREET, LONDON

Holmes
Well, that’s that hopefully. There is nothing like first-hand evidence.

Watson
You amaze me, Holmes. Surely you’re not as certain as you pretend to be about all those particulars you gave them.

Holmes
There’s no room for mistake. The first thing I observed upon arriving was that a cab had made two ruts with its wheels close to the curb— here. As we have not had rain for a week until last night, the wheels which have made such a deep impression must have been there during the night. There are these marks of the horse’s hoof, as well— the outline of one of which was far more clearly cut than that of the other three, indicating a new shoe. Since the cab came after the rain began, and the authorities did not come by cab, these are the tracks of the cab that brought the murderer and his victim here.

Watson
That seems simple enough. But how about the murderer’s height?

Holmes
Why, the height of a man, in nine cases out of ten, can be told from the length of his stride. It’s a simple calculation, though I won’t bore you with figures. I had this fellow’s stride both on the clay here and in the dust on the floor inside. Then I had a way of checking my calculation. When a man writes on a wall, his instinct leads him to write at about the level of his own eyes. The writing was just over six feet from the ground. It was child’s play.

Watson
And his age?

Holmes
Well, if a man can stride four and a half feet without effort— as he did here— he isn’t quite “over the hill.” That’s a breadth of this puddle he clearly skipped across. Mister Patent-leather Boots had walked around and Mister Square Toes had hopped over— here, see? There is no mystery about it at all. I am simply applying to ordinary life a few of those precepts of observation and deduction which I advocated in the article that gave you such a laugh this morning. It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the most important.

Watson
But what about the fingernails and the Trichinopoly cigar— and the poison?

Holmes
The writing on the wall was done with a man’s forefinger dipped in blood. My glass allowed me to observe that the plaster was slightly scratched in doing it, which would be unlikely if the man’s nail had been trimmed. I gathered up some ash from the floor. It was dark grey and flaky— the type of cigar ash that can only come from Trichinopoly. I’ve made a study of cigar ashes and poisons, and was able to distinguish both in this case. The smell on the victim’s lips and his contorted face and limbs indicated the effects of a particular type of poison I know. It is in such details that the skilled detective differs from the Lestrade and Gregson type.

Watson
My head is in a whirl.

Holmes
You see here… Patent-leathers and Square-toes came in the same cab, walked up the pathway together in a friendly fashion… and when they got in there, they walked up and down the room— or rather, Patent-leathers stood still while Square-toes kept pacing, waiting for the poison to take...
effect. I could read it all in the dust. But I mustn’t tell you any more, Doctor. You know a
magician gets no credit once he has explained his trick; and if I show you too much of my method,
you will conclude that I am a very ordinary individual after all.

Watson
I shall never do that. You have brought detection as near an exact science as it ever will be
brought in this world.

(Music begins)

Holmes (Pausing, touched) Why — thank you, Watson… It is my business to know things. Perhaps I have
trained myself to see what others overlook. There’s a scarlet thread of murder and mayhem
running all through the colorless landscape of this Empire — and our duty is to unravel it, and
isolate it, and expose every inch of it. It is, I believe, a high calling. In His time, God will right
the wrongs.

Watson
Indeed. But you’ve left Lestrade and Gregson with everything they need to take all the credit.

Holmes
And what of it? They have their man, the culprit is caught, and justice has been served.

Watson
But — what was the motive for the murder?

Holmes
Come, come Watson! We must leave something for Lestrade to figure out!

(They laugh and approach:)

SCENE 7: THE STUDY OF 221 B BAKER STREET

(Mrs. Hudson greets them as Jabez Wilson is seen sitting in the study)

Watson’s Voice
Our landlady, Mrs. Hudson, is a long-suffering woman. Not only is her first-floor flat invaded at
all hours by throngs of unusual and sometimes undesirable characters, but the irregular hours and
eccentric habits Holmes and I engage in as her tenants would likely try anyone. But she stands in
the deepest awe of Holmes and is unfailingly pleasant and helpful… This particular occasion was
no exception…

Hudson
(Standing in front of outer door)… That’s right, Mister Holmes. He’s been here since just after
you left this morning — insisted he must see you and begged to wait for you, he did. (Handing
Holmes a card) A Mister Jabez Wilson.

Holmes
Ah, yes. Thank you, Mrs. Hudson. (She exits) Greetings, Mister Wilson. I received your wire
yesterday. A most unusual case, I must say…

Wilson
Thank you for seeing me, Mister Holmes. (He habitually dabs at his brow with handkerchief)

(Music fades)

Watson
I say, Holmes, would you like me to wait over at—

Holmes
Nonsense. Please stay. (To Wilson) Mr. Wilson, this is my trusted associate, Doctor Watson. I
believe he shares my love of that which is beyond the commonplace and may therefore prove
invaluably helpful. From your wire, I dare say your case is one of the most singular stories I have
ever heard. As I have pondered your situation, it is impossible for me to say whether a crime is
indicated of not. But it is a fascinating set of circumstances nevertheless. Perhaps, Mister Wilson,
you would be so kind as to recount your narrative. Not only would it be beneficial for my friend
Doctor Watson, but I am also most anxious to hear every detail from your own lips. I cannot recall
a single parallel case…

Wilson
(Checking his pockets) Er — yes, I’ll be happy to tell you everything. I — ah — I’m quite sure I
brought the advertisement with me — er — for you to see for yourself.

Holmes
While you’re looking for the advertisement you mentioned in your cable, Mister Wilson, I might
say, Watson, that I really know nothing of Mister Wilson beyond what you know him. Except, of
course, the obvious facts that he has at some time done manual labor, that he is a Freemason, that he has been to China, and that he has recently done a considerable amount of writing.

**Wilson**

How in heaven’s name did you know all that, Mister Holmes?! It’s true as the gospel that I once did manual labor — I started off as a ship’s carpenter.

**Holmes**

Your hands, my dear sir. The muscles of your right hand are more developed than your left. Your right hand is bigger.

**Wilson**

And the writing?

**Holmes**

What else can be indicated by that right cuff, so very shiny for five inches?

**Watson**

And the left sleeve with the smooth patch near the elbow, where you rest it upon the desk —

**Holmes**

Excellent, Watson!

**Watson**

But... China?

**Holmes**

(Pointing to Wilson’s wrist) The fish — tattooed immediately above your right wrist. I have made a study of tattoo marks, Mister Wilson, and have even written on the subject. That trick of staining the fishes’ scales a delicate pink hue is quite unique to China. When, in addition, I see a Chinese coin hanging from your watch chain — right beneath your Mason tie tack — the matter becomes even more simple.

**Wilson**

(Laughing) Well, I never! I thought at first that you had done something clever, but I see now that there was nothing to it after all! Ha, ha, ha…!

(Holmes pauses, icily)

**Holmes**

I think, Watson, that I make a mistake in explaining and that my reputation such as it is, will be shipwrecked if I continue to be so candid. “Omne ignotum pro magnifico,” you know!

**Wilson**

Er— what was that? (He finally pulls out advertisement)

**Watson**

“Everything becomes commonplace by explanation.”

**Holmes**

A rather loose translation, Watson. (To Wilson) Ah, I see you have the advertisement, Mister Wilson. Show the doctor, please.

**Wilson**

Certainly. You can read it here for yourself, Doctor Watson. This is where it all began. (Hands advertisement to Watson)

**Watson**

(Reading) “To the Red-Headed League. At the bequest of the late Ezekiah Hopkins of Lebanon, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., there is a vacancy open which entitles a member of the League to a salary of four pounds a week for purely nominal services. All red-headed men sound in body and mind, and above the age of twenty-one years, are eligible… Apply in person on Monday, at eleven o’clock, to Duncan Ross, at the offices of the League, Seven Pope’s Court Fleet Street.”… Can this be serious?

**Holmes**

(Chuckling heartily) It is a bit off the beaten track, isn’t it? Now, Watson, note the name and date of the paper.

**Watson**

Hmm. “The Morning Chronicle” of April 27, 1890. Two months ago.

**Holmes**

Very fine. And now, Mister Wilson, off you go at scratch, and tell us all about your experience and the effect which this advertisement has had upon your life.

(Watson begins taking notes)

**Wilson**

Well, gentlemen. I have a small pawnbroker’s business at Coburg Square, here in London. It’s not a large business and it hasn’t done much more than just give me a living. I used to be able to employ two assistants, but now I have only one. And I’d have a tough time paying him, except he is willing to work for me at half wages, so he may learn the business.

**Holmes**

Humph! What is the name of this obliging youth?

**Wilson**

His name is Vincent Spaulding — and he’s not such a youth, either. It’s hard to say his age. But I should not wish a smarter assistant, Mister Holmes. And I know he could easily earn twice what I am able to give him. So— after all — if he is satisfied, why should I put ideas in his head?
Holmes  Why, indeed?  You are certainly blessed to have an employee who comes so well under the full market price. A most uncommon circumstance in this day and age. I don’t know that your assistant is not as remarkable as your advertisement.

Wilson  (Chuckles briefly) Oh, I know. But he does have his faults, too. Never has there been such a fellow for photography! Snapping away with a camera when he ought to be improving his mind, and then diving down into the cellar like a rabbit into its hole to develop those confounded pictures!... But generally, he’s a good worker. There’s no vice in him. In fact — it was he who first showed me the advertisement…

(Incidental music begins)

(Wilson rises and walks into)

SCENE 8: WILSON'S PAWN SHOP

(Spaulding enters scene, carrying newspaper)

Spaulding I wish to the Lord that I was a red-headed man, Mister Wilson.

Wilson Oh? For heaven’s sake — why?

Spaulding Well, here’s another vacancy on the League of Red-Headed men. It’s worth quite a little fortune to any man who gets it. And I understand there are more vacancies than there are men, so that the trustees are at their wit’s end about what to do with the money. Ha! If my hair would only change color, here would be a nice little job to walk into.


Spaulding Never heard of it?

Wilson Never.

Spaulding Well, I wonder at that! Especially since you are eligible yourself for one of these vacancies.

Wilson Oh?

Spaulding Certainly. Fine red hair. Nice money, too. Several hundred a year. And the work is apparently very slight…

Wilson (Peering at advertisement) Hmm. That is interesting.

Spaulding It evidently need not interfere with one’s other occupations.

Wilson But it all sounds too — too fantastic! Impossible…

Spaulding Well, as far as I know, the League is legitimate. It was founded it says here, by an Ezekiah Hopkins — a very peculiar, but very rich American. I understand he was red-headed and wanted to share his wealth with other red-headed men. So, when he died, he left instructions to have the League set up. Wanted to do others a good turn.

Wilson But there must be thousands who will apply…

Spaulding I doubt it sir. And I doubt many would qualify. They must be adults and they must be men. And they must be Londoners. Hopkins was a Londoner himself before leaving for America. And they’re looking for red hair — like yours. Pure red.

Wilson Hmm. Pure… red…

Spaulding I’ll bet you could walk right into the position. But… perhaps it would be too much trouble for the sake of a few hundred pounds… (He wanders off, leaving paper for Wilson)

(Wilson returns to:) 

SCENE 9: THE STUDY OF 221 B BAKER STREET

Wilson Well, Mister Holmes, I’m a rather quiet, stay-at-home kind of man. My business comes to me, instead of my going to it. I was often weeks on end without putting my feet over the door mat and, in that way I didn’t know much about what was going on beyond my pawn broker world. So… when I heard of this League… it seemed interesting. I was intrigued. And you can see for yourself, gentlemen, that my hair is of a very full and rich tint of red. So, I told him to put up the shutters, close the shop for the day, and come with me. He was certainly willing to have a holiday and join me in this — this quest. So… we started off for the address given in the advertisement.
And what a sight that was! Dozens and dozens of red-headed men queued up in line. I never knew there were so many folk in London with red hair! And all kinds of shades of red. I just about gave up when I saw them all. But Spaulding kept encouraging me. And as he said. Not many could match my shade of red— so I persisted. Somehow, we finally made it into the League’s office…

Holmes

(Chuckling) Your experience has been highly entertaining thus far. Pray continue your most interesting statement…

(Wilson walks into)

SCENE 10: LEAGUE OFFICE, FLEET STREET, LONDON

(Wilson joins the waiting Spaulding. Several “red-haired” men wearing hats are leaving)

Wilson

Well, when I got to the League office, I saw there was nothing but a small table, a couple chairs, and a man with hair as red as mine who appeared to be in charge. I also noticed some apparently unsuccessful candidates leaving…

(Music fades)

Ross

(Seeing Wilson) Ahhh! What have we here?!

Spaulding

This is Mister Jabez Wilson. And he is willing to fill a vacancy in the League.

Ross

And he is admirably suited for it... He has every requirement. I cannot recall when I have seen anyone so fine. Congratulations! It would be an injustice— unthinkable— to not accept such a fellow as you... You will, however, I am sure, excuse me for taking an obvious precaution.

(He pulls on Wilson's hair)

Wilson

Ohhh! Owww!

Ross

Ah, there's a tear in your eye. I perceive that all is as it appears to be and as it should be. We have to be very careful. Twice we have been deceived by wigs... and once by paint! And I could tell you tales of what some folks have done with wax that would cause you to question the state of humanity. (Looking off to wings and shouting) The vacancy is filled!!!... pensioners upon the fund left by our noble benefactor, Ezekiah Hopkins. When shall you be able to begin your new work?

Wilson

Well, it's a little awkward. I already have a business...

Spaulding

Oh, don't worry, Mister Wilson. I can help tend to that.

Wilson

Well, what would be the hours?

Ross

Ten to two.

Wilson

Well, the work at my shop is mostly evening work— so that would suit me very well. And the pay?

Ross

Four pounds a week.

Wilson

And the work?

Ross

Purely nominal.

Wilson

Er— what do you call purely nominal?

Ross

Oh, it's quite easy, really. But you must remain in this office the entire time. If you leave, you forfeit this position forever. The will is very clear on this point.

Wilson

It's only four hours a day and I wouldn't think of leaving.

Ross

I should think not. It would be a shame to lose your good fortune.

Wilson

And the work?

Ross

You simply copy the “Encyclopedia Britannica.” Here is the first volume, paper, and a pen. You will sit here to work. Will you be ready to start tomorrow?

Wilson

Certainly.

(Music begins)

Ross

Very well. Then, good-bye, Mister Jabez Wilson. And congratulations once more on the position you have been fortunate enough to gain. (Exits)

(Spaulding shakes Wilson's hand and exits)

Wilson

(Stepping forward, addressing Holmes) Well, Mister Holmes, I began to think the whole affair was some great hoax or fraud. But I talked myself into returning the next day, especially when Vincent Spaulding kept encouraging me. And since I had nothing to lose, and needed the money, I went in at the appointed time. To my surprise and delight, everything was as right as possible…
Ross  
(Returning) Ah, good morning, Mister Wilson. There is volume one of the encyclopedia. Letter A. I’ll check in with you from time to time. Have a good day writing. (Exits)

Wilson  
So I started copying and he dropped in from time to time to see if I was all right—or at least to see that I was there, I suppose. And then, promptly at two in the afternoon…

Ross  
(Returning, inspecting Wilson’s papers) Ah. Ah ha… Well done. Very fine work, Mister Wilson. Until tomorrow, then. (He shakes Wilson’s hand and exits)
(Wilson returns to:)

SCENE 11: STUDY OF 221 B BAKER STREET

Holmes  
And so you continued.

Wilson  
Day after day, week after week. Gradually, Mister Duncan Ross took to coming in only once in the morning, and then, after a time, he didn’t come by at all. But I never dared to leave because the money was good and I didn’t want to lose my situation. Every Saturday, he gave me four golden sovereigns for my week’s work… Eight weeks went by. I had written about abacus, abbey, architecture, Acts of the Apostles, anatomy, apes and aqueducts—praying that I’d finally get to the B’s!… and then, suddenly, the whole thing came to an end.

Holmes  
To an end? (Holmes and Watson have become increasingly amused)

Wilson  
Yes, sir. Yesterday morning, this notice was tacked to the door.
(Music fades)

Holmes  
(Taking notice from Wilson; reading) “The Red-Headed League is Dissolved.”
(Holmes and Watson stare at this notice, then catch each other’s eye, and laugh uproariously)

Wilson  
I cannot see that there is anything very funny… If you can do nothing more than laugh at me, perhaps I should go elsewhere…

Holmes  
(Stopping Wilson) No, no, Mister Wilson! Forgive us. I wouldn’t miss your case for the world! It is most refreshingly unusual. And, you must admit, a bit odd.

Wilson  
Well, yes.

Holmes  
Do tell us what you did when you found this card on the door.

Wilson  
I asked the building manager what he knew and he gave me a forwarding address for suite number four. He said he never heard of the League, but that he rented the office to a red-headed man called Bill Morris, who he said was a lawyer using number four temporarily while his own office was redecorated. So I went to find this Mister Morris or Mister Ross or whoever he is at his supposed new address and when I got there all I found was a manufacturer of artificial legs and kneecaps.
(Holmes and Watson laugh again)

Wilson  
Really, Mister Holmes!

Watson  
Please excuse us, Mister Wilson. It has been a full day. What did you do next?

Wilson  
I didn’t want to lose such a good arrangement without a struggle—or at least some explanation. And I heard that you were good enough to give advice to poor folk who were in need of it—so I came right away to you.

Holmes  
And I am indeed very glad that you did. Your case is remarkable and I shall be happy to look into it. But there may be something more serious afoot than what might first appear.

Wilson  
What’s more serious than losing my extra four pounds a week?!

Watson  
You know, Mister Wilson, I don’t know that you really have a grievance against the League. You’re apparently over thirty pounds richer from your experience. Not to mention the fact that you’re now an expert on every topic beginning with the letter “A.” (Watson and Holmes suppress chuckles)

Wilson  
But, confound it! What was it all about? Was it a prank? Who is behind it? It was an expensive joke for them to play. What does it mean?

Holmes  
We shall endeavor to find the answers. Tell me… This assistant of yours—Spaulding—who first called your attention to the advertisement… how long had he been with you?

Wilson  
About a month.

Holmes  
How did he come to you?

Wilson  
In answer to an advertisement.

Holmes  
Was he the only applicant?

Wilson  
Oh no. There were many, but as I mentioned earlier, he was willing to work cheaply.
Holmes  Yes.  At half wages in fact.
Wilson  Yes.  So naturally I snapped him up.
Holmes  What is he like, this Vincent Spaulding?
Holmes  Ah!  I thought as much.  Have you ever noticed whether his ears are pierced for earrings?
Wilson  Why, yes, sir.  Yes!  He told me a gypsy had done it when he was a lad.
Holmes  He is still with you?
Wilson  Yes.  I just left him at the shop an hour ago.
Holmes  And has your business been well tended in your absence?
Wilson  Yes, sir.  Nothing to complain of.  There's usually little to do from ten to two.
Holmes  That will do, Mister Wilson.  I shall be happy to give you an opinion in a day or two.  Today is Saturday, and I hope by Monday we shall come to a conclusion.
Wilson  Oh, thank you, Mister Holmes.  Er— about the matter of your fee…
Holmes  Don't worry about that.  I have reason to believe it will be taken care of by another.
Wilson  Oh… Well… Good day, then.  And thank you, Mister Holmes… Doctor Watson.  Thank you, both.
Watson  Good day, Mister Wilson.  Try not to worry…

Holmes  Well, Watson.  What do you make of it all?
Watson  As a rule, the more bizarre a thing is, the less mysterious it proves to be.  But we must deliberate over this matter.  There are graver issues hanging over this affair than what appears on the surface.  (Sits in chair)

Watson  What do you propose to do?
Holmes  (Picking up violin) To play… I beg you not to disturb me for forty-five minutes.  (Holmes begins playing.  Watson sits, awkwardly, in wonderment)

Watson's Voice  And play he did.  The strains of Holmes' violin were as melancholy as his mood.  This was an apparently more sinister matter than what I could possibly discern… At length, I was startled out of my stupor when suddenly…  (Music picks up pace as instrumental theme)

Holmes  Come along, Watson!  Let's take a stroll to Coburg Square.  Mister Jabez Wilson’s Pawn Shop.  The game’s afoot!...

SCENE 12: STREET OF WILSON’S PAWN SHOP (COBURG SQUARE)

Watson’s Voice  And so— off we went to Coburg Square…
Holmes  (To Spaulding) Oh, good afternoon, sir.  I wonder if you can tell me how to get to the Strand from here…
Spaulding  Certainly.  (Pointing) Third right.  Fourth left.  Good day.  (Exits)

Holmes  Smart fellow, that.  He is, in my judgment, the fourth smartest man in London, and perhaps, the second most daring.  Behind only Professor Moriarty, the Napoleon of Crime, Watson.  Moriarty is the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city.  He sits like a spider in the center of his web— but that web has a thousand strands and he knows every quiver of each of them.  This Spaulding is tied to him somehow.  I have known him from previous cases.

Watson  Evidently Mister Wilson’s assistant counts for a good deal in this mystery of the Red-Headed League.  But I could have told you how to get to the Strand from here.  So you wanted to see Spaulding.

Holmes  Not him.  (Holmes begins tapping the street with a walking stick)
Watson  What then?
Holmes  The knees of his trousers.
Watson  And what did you see?
Holmes  What I expected to see.
Watson  Why are you tapping the pavement?
Holmes  My dear Doctor.  This is a time for observation, not talk.  We are spies in an enemy’s territory.  Let us now survey the principal features and businesses of Coburg Square.  (Looking about)  Hmmmm.
Well, there’s Mortimer’s, the tobacconist… the vegetarian restaurant…

The little newspaper shop… the Coburg branch of the City Bank…

McFarlane’s carriage depot…

Very well. Let us commit this lay-out to memory and be off. It is entirely possible we are being observed. Over here… (They move to side stage area) Watson… A considerable crime is in contemplation. I have every reason to believe we shall be in time to stop it. Today being Saturday somewhat complicates matters… So it must be tonight. I shall need your help, old boy— if it’s all right with you, of course.

I wouldn’t miss it.

Thank you. Then meet me at this corner at ten o’clock tonight, won’t you? That should be early enough. And… as there may be some danger, Doctor, kindly put your army revolver in your pocket. (He begins to leave)

But— where are you going?

To make arrangements for our little meeting. See you tonight!... (Exits)

(Watson exits through audience as we hear:)

I trust that I am not any more dense than the next man, but I became oppressed with a sense of my own stupidity in my dealings with Sherlock Holmes. Here I had heard what he had heard, I had seen what he had seen, and yet— it was evident that he saw clearly not only what had happened, but what was about to happen, while to me the whole business was a jumble of confusion.

Still, I could not help but think that trouble was in store for those Sherlock Holmes had set out hunt down… And so, at ten o’clock that evening— eagerly awaited his return…

(Watson returns through audience to his previous position)

Ah! Our party is complete! (The men approach Watson)

Watson, I think you remember Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard. Let me introduce you to Mister Merryweather, who is to be our companion in tonight’s little adventure.

Our friend here, Mister Holmes, is a wonderful man for starting a chase. All he needs is an old dog to help him do the running down.

I hope a wild goose may not prove to be the end of our chase.

You may safely place your confidence in Mister Holmes.

I don’t care for amateur investigations.

In the short time I’ve known him, I believe I can say the word “amateur” hardly befits Mister Holmes.

If you say so…

Oh, he may have some fanciful methods. But I dare say he has all the makings of a… of a detective.

You’re too kind, Inspector.

Not at all.

But I still say the Coburg City Bank is as secure as any bank anywhere. There is no possible way it can be broken into. Even our insurance assessors agree on that point.

And, of course, you should know— being not only the branch manager, but also the bank director.

I should know and I do know. And, what’s more, this is the first Saturday night in twenty years that I have missed my regular bridge game. And I find myself extremely inconvenienced!

I suspect you’ll find tonight’s game more exciting and the stakes considerably higher. You’ll be playing for many thousands of pounds.

Oh?

(Music begins)

And what will my reward be, Mister Holmes?

A young man named John Clay.

No! John Clay? How I’d like to get my hands on that devil! Murderer, thief, forger… you name it. He’s young, but he’s a master criminal.

Then let us proceed, gentlemen.

Over here? To the pawn shop?

No, Watson— this way. Mister Merryweather has kindly consented to quietly conduct us to the vault of his bank.
Merryweather  Hmmphf! Against my better judgment… This way…

(Music rises briefly, then fades)

SCENE 13: VAULT OF COBURG CITY BANK

Merryweather  (Offstage) There are only two keys to this vault room. I have one. And the chairman holds the other in his personal safe…
(The party enters with lanterns in hand)

(Music fades)

Holmes  (Looking up) You don’t seem vulnerable from above.
Merryweather  Nor from below, I assure you! (He taps floor with his walking stick) Hmm. (He taps again) I say! —
Holmes  (Crossly) I must really ask you to be more quiet. You have already jeopardized the entire success of our expedition. Might I beg you to have the goodness to sit down on one of these boxes, and not to interfere?

(Merryweather sits. Holmes looks around methodically)

Merryweather  There is no way for a thief to enter.
Holmes  Is there a particular reason why someone would desperately seek to enter this vault just now?
Merryweather  Not particularly— er— nothing—
Holmes  Something. Something you may be concealing from us.
Merryweather  The content of this vault is confidential information known only to me and the bank directors. It is not to be divulged to members of the public. Not even to… amateur detectives.
Watson  (Indignant) Private consulting detective, Mister Merryweather…
Lestrade  I’d advise you to cooperate with Mister Holmes…
Holmes  Especially as at this moment I am seeking to save your skin— and that of your fellow directors. So what is it?

Merryweather  French gold. A national loan from the nation of France to our government. These crates are full of it. I am literally sitting on a fortune. We had warnings that attempts to steal it were possible and we have been arranging to transfer portions of it to other branches… Sixty-thousand pounds…
Holmes  (Motioning for silence) Yes… they’re approaching… The stakes are higher than I could have imagined. Someone has had access to confidential information and they are making bold use of it.
Lestrade  Are you suggesting…?
Holmes  Professor Moriarty.
Lestrade  His name echoes through the underworld. But he is never seen, let alone caught. He is too cunning.
Holmes  And we shall not meet him tonight. But we shall gladly reel in an underling. The thieves have only one way out. And that is to return to the other side of Coburg Square, which you have now guarded and blocked— right, Inspector?

Lestrade  As you suggested, Mister Holmes, I have several constables waiting there.
Watson  Then, how will the thieves enter?
Holmes  Through the floor.

(Noises are heard)

Watson  What?
Merryweather  What?!
Holmes  Shhh! They are upon us… (To Merryweather) Would you be so kind as to extinguish your lamp?
Merryweather  And sit here in the dark?
Holmes  (After a piercing stare) Yes. (The lamp is extinguished. All is dark. Digging is heard)

(Music begins)

Holmes  Watson… if there’s trouble… don’t hesitate to fire your revolver.
(A hand emerges from “hole” in floor and a beam of light pierces through. The hand— of Spaulding— pushes up remaining plank and he now begins pulling himself up through the hole)
Spaulding  It’s all clear, Bill. Hand up the bags and chisel!
(Holmes flashes lantern toward Spaulding, illuminating vault)
Spaulding (Caught in light) Run, Bill, run! (He aims gun at Holmes, who knocks it out of his hand with walking stick as it fires a shot)

Watson Great Scot!

Lestrade (Grabbing Spaulding) It’s no use. Stay where you are!

Holmes There’s no chance of escape… John Clay.

Spaulding So… So I see… At least my pal will be all right.

Holmes Bill Morris… alias Duncan Ross— is swiftly running right into the hands of several cheerful constables… back at Jabez Wilson’s Pawn Shop.

Spaulding Hmm. You seem to have done the thing very completely. I must compliment you.

Holmes And I you. Your red-headed idea was very new and effective. I am Sherlock Holmes. (Looking at Watson) Private consulting detective.

Spaulding I didn’t for a moment suspect you were with Scotland Yard, Mister Holmes.

Lestrade Here now! That’s enough of that! Come along, you!... (Takes him in hand)

Holmes Oh, by the way, Mister Clay… would I be correct in assuming the idea for the Red-Headed League originated with a certain… Professor Moriarty?

Spaulding I suggest you keep the name off your lips, Mister Holmes… if you value your future well being… (He bows with a flourish. Lestrade takes him)

(Music fades)

Lestrade (Exiting) All right, let’s go…

Merryweather Really, Mister Holmes! (Blubbering) What can I say? Please forgive my misjudgment of you. I don’t know how the bank can ever thank you enough. You have detected and defeated one of the most notorious attempts at bank robbery in history and I simply—

Holmes I have been at some small expense over this matter which—(Tapping Merryweather on shoulder with stick)—I shall expect the Bank to reimburse, as well as remit an equitable fee.

Merryweather Oh yes, of course! (Pulling money bag from vest) Here, Mister Holmes— for starters. A small token. I’ll draft a cheque for an additional amount on Monday. Oh, thank you, Mister Holmes! I so appreciate—

Holmes (Exiting abruptly, with Watson) Goodnight, Mister Merryweather.

(Music begins)

(SCENE 14: BAKER STREET, LONDON AND 221 B STUDY)

Watson Amazing, Holmes.

Holmes Well, Watson. Now we know why the Red-Headed League was created. I could not help but wonder about Vincent Spaulding— John Clay in reality— when he agreed to work for Mister Wilson at half wages. He had to have some motive for wanting to work at the pawn shop.

Watson But how did you know the motive?

Holmes When Mister Wilson described his assistant— with the acid stain and pierced ears— I remembered the record and description of John Clay. I surmised Vincent Spaulding and John Clay were one and the same. But why was Clay there?

Watson The photography gave you the clue!

Holmes Precisely. The cellar. He was working on something in the cellar.

Watson The Red-Headed League was a way to get Wilson out of the shop so Clay and his accomplice could dig a tunnel from the pawn shop to the bank. That’s why you were looking at Clay’s knees when you first saw him, right?

Holmes Indeed. You, also, must have noticed how worn and stained they were. When I tapped my stick on the pavement, I was ascertaining where the tunnel was headed and whether it stretched out front or to the side. And when the league was dissolved, I took that as a sign the tunnel had been completed. Clay no longer worried about Mister Wilson’s presence in the shop.

Watson And the fact that they would strike on a Saturday? Was that a guess?

Holmes Watson… You disappoint me… I never guess… Saturday is the perfect day for stealing bullion. They would have had all day tomorrow to escape before the bank opened on Monday. Therefore, I knew they would strike tonight.

(They walk toward the study)
Oh, you’ve reasoned it out beautifully, Holmes. Such a long chain, and yet, every link rings true.

(They enter the study)

Holmes

(Handing money pouch to Watson) Would you be so kind as to pass this money on to Mister Wilson at his shop? Scotland Yard has undoubtedly made a mess over there rounding up John Clay’s accomplice. And Mister Wilson has lost his only employee, after all. Perhaps this will help tide him over.

Watson

I will indeed.

Holmes

Well, now it’s over. I already feel emptiness closing in on me. (Picking up and playing violin) My life seems to be spent in one long effort to escape the commonplaces of existence. Well… perhaps a new problem will arise soon— before terminal boredom sets in…

(Watson sits down to write as Holmes plays violin)

Watson’s Voice

I couldn’t help feeling a little sorry for Holmes. His great mind thrives on great challenges. Little did we realize that shocking events tied to a new bizarre case were just around the corner— and would provide the greatest challenge ever faced by… Sherlock Holmes.

(Music ends on single violin note as lights fade gradually to black)

(End of Act I)

INTERMISSION
ACT II

MUSIC: ENTR’ACTE (“Theme From ‘Sherlock Holmes’”)

SCENE 1: BAKER STREET, LONDON AND 221 B STUDY

(As entr’acte transitions to incidental underscore, at light’s rise, Holmes and Watson stroll toward Baker Street study)

Holmes
Well, Watson. You’ve been good enough to accompany me on these daily walks through town for several days and I appreciate it. But I’m afraid these excursions are no antidote to the boredom I feel when there’s no case pending.

Watson
Hmm. I’m not sure I know how to take that.

Holmes
No offense. But I created my particular profession so that I may have an arena for my peculiar knowledge and certain abilities. Using these skills in service to my fellow citizens is my greatest satisfaction and highest reward. To be engaged in anything less is dreadfully dull.

Watson
Sorry, Holmes. Perhaps there will be—

News Boy
Strand Magazine! Hot off the press! Get your latest Strand Magazine! “Case of the Red-Headed League Solved by Sherlock Holmes!” Strand Magazine!

Watson
Here boy. (Handing him coin) I’ll have another.

News Boy
Thank you, sir! (Handing Watson magazine) And good morning, Mister Holmes!

Holmes
You recognize me?

News Boy
I dare say you’re the talk of London! And good for my sales! (Moving along) Strand Magazine! Sherlock Holmes Cracks Case! Read all about it! Etc.

Holmes
Really, Watson. When I gave consent for you to write of our exploits I never dreamed it would come to all this.

Watson
I hoped it would please you.

Holmes
Justice is its own reward.

Watson
Have you had a chance to read it?

Holmes
Oh I glanced at it. Honestly, I cannot congratulate you upon your written account. Detection is, or ought to be, an exact science—and should be treated in an objective, unemotional manner. You have sought to tinge it with frivolous suspense and a romanticism which is akin to working a love story into the fifth proposition of Euclid!

Watson
Sorry, old boy. (Somewhat hurt) I was only trying to—er—present the facts. See the credit go where it belongs…

Holmes
I know… Forgive me, Watson. You know how I am when I’m at loose ends. (Holmes pats Watson on the shoulder and they enter the 221 B study) (Music begins fading)

Watson
Well, perhaps I have just the thing to keep your faculties engaged. Would you think me impertinent if I were to put your deductive powers to a test?

Holmes
I should be delighted to look into any problem which you might submit to me.

Watson
I have heard you say that owners of certain objects leave indelible impressions on them—impressions that a trained observer might read.

Holmes
Quite so.

Watson
I have here a watch which has recently come into my possession. Would you kindly give me your opinion on the character or habits of the late owner? (Hands pocket watch to Holmes, who scrutinizes it)
Watson’s Voice

I gave him the watch with a slight feeling of amusement in my heart because this test was, I thought, an impossible one and I hoped it might help curb the somewhat dogmatic tone he occasionally assumed. He balanced the watch in his hand, gazed at its dial, opened the back, examined the works, and studied it first with his naked eyes, and then, with his large convex lens. I could hardly keep from smiling at his crestfallen face as he handed it back to me…

Holmes

There is hardly any information that may be discerned. The watch has been recently cleaned, which robs me of my most suggestive facts.

Watson

Yes. I’m afraid it was cleaned before being sent to me. (Watson sits)

Watson Voice

In my heart, I accused Holmes of putting forward a most lame and lamentable excuse to cover his failure. What could he possibly discover from looking at an unclean watch?

Holmes

Though unsatisfactory, my examination has not been entirely barren. I judge that the watch belonged to your elder brother who inherited it from your father.

Watson

That you gather, no doubt, from the “H. W.” on the back?

Holmes

Yes. The “W.” suggests your own name. The date of the watch is nearly fifty years back, and the initials are as old as the watch—so it was made for the generation before ours. Jewelry usually descends to the eldest son and he is more likely to have the same name as the father. I believe you once said your father has been gone many years—and so, therefore, the watch has been in the hands of your eldest brother.

Watson

Right so far… anything else?

Holmes

He was a man of untidy habits—very untidy and careless. He had good prospects in life but threw away his opportunities. He lived for some time in poverty, with occasional short bursts of prosperity, and finally—he began drinking too much and died. That is all I can gather.

Watson

(Leaping up from chair, deeply troubled) This is unworthy of you, Holmes. I cannot believe you have descended to this. You—you have undoubtedly made inquiries into the history of my unhappy brother, and now you pretend to deduce this knowledge in some fanciful way. You cannot expect me to believe that you have read all this from his old watch! It is—it is unkind, and to speak plainly, it has a touch of charlatanism in it.

Holmes

(Sincerely, with his hand on Watson’s shoulder) My dear Doctor… pray accept my sincerest apologies… Viewing the matter as an abstract problem, I had forgotten how personal and painful a thing it might be to you… I assure you, however, that I never even knew you had a brother until you handed me the watch.

Watson

Then how in the name of all that is holy did you get these facts? They are absolutely correct in every particular.

Holmes

I could only say what was the balance of probability. I didn’t expect to be so accurate.

Watson

But it was not mere guess work?

Holmes

Watson… I have told you…I never guess. Guessing is a shocking habit destructive to the logical faculty. Guessing implies our universe is governed by mere chance—and that is unthinkable.

Watson

Yes…yes, I see…

Holmes

As I learned in subsequent visits with our old friend and previous client, Mister Jabez Wilson—at his pawn shop—it is quite customary for English pawnbrokers, when they take a watch, to scratch the number of the ticket with a pin-point upon the inside of the case. It is more handy than a label and there is no risk of the number being lost or altered. There are no less than four such tiny numbers etched and visible to my lens on the inside of the watchcase. Inference—that your brother was often on hard times and consequently frequented a pawn shop. Second inference—that he had occasional bursts of prosperity, or he could not have redeemed the watch. Finally, I ask you to look at the inner plate which contains the key hole necessary for winding the watch. What sober man’s key could have scored those grooves and scratches? But you will never see a
drunkard’s watch without them. He winds it a night, and he leaves these traces of his unsteady hand… Now I ask you, my friend… where is the mystery in all this?

Watson
It is… as clear as daylight now. But, my dear Holmes… if you had lived a few centuries ago, you would surely have been burned at the stake!... I regret the injustice which I did you. I should have had more faith in your exceptional—

Hudson
(Offstage) Young man! Young man! This is highly irregular! Rude and improper!

(Music begins)

McFarlane
(Bursting in upstage “back” door, carrying papers) Mister Sherlock Holmes?!!

Hudson
(Entering, breathless) Oh, I am sorry, Mister Holmes. He just—

McFarlane
Then you are Mister Holmes!

Hudson
He wouldn’t even let me announce that—he just—

McFarlane
Thank God I made it here! (He collapses and Watson breaks his fall)

Hudson
Watson!

Watson
Mrs. Hudson—some water please.

Hudson
(Exiting) Right away, sir!

McFarlane
I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. Please forgive me. I am nearly mad. I’ve been running across the city to get here. I am the unhappy John Hector McFarlane.

(Watson helps him into chair and digs through his bag)

Holmes
Do make yourself comfortable, Mister McFarlane. I’m sure with what you’ve evidently been through, a sedative may be in order—eh, Watson?

Hudson
(Entering with water)

Holmes
(Entering with water) Here you are, dear boy.

McFarlane
(I’m sorry to inconvenience you, ma’am. (He drinks water, taking what Watson offers)

Hudson
Think nothing of it, my lad…(To others) The poor dear. It’s as if he has run for miles.

McFarlane
(Calming down, but still a bit breathless) I have… You must save me, Mr. Holmes. Please save me!

Holmes
(To Watson) Is he all right?

Watson
Yes, I think so. Just a little out of breath… Er—thank you, Mrs. Hudson.

(She exits)

Holmes
We may be in need of your revolver, then.

McFarlane
There will be no need for that, sir. I promise I am not dangerous. You must excuse me, Mister Holmes, but I’ve run from the police for several miles just to see you. I must tell you my story before they catch up with me.

Holmes
Have you been followed?

McFarlane
Yes, I have.

(Music fades)

Holmes
Then by all means, let us commence. You mentioned your name a moment ago as if I should know it. But I assure you that beyond the obvious facts that you are a bachelor, a lawyer, a resident of Blackheath, and an asthmatic, I know nothing whatever about you.

McFarlane
Yes—I am all that. But—how did you—?

Watson
Er—allow me, Holmes. Er—the untidiness of your attire and absence of ring points to your being single. The papers you carry, with the legal seal and ribbon marks you as a lawyer, and the manner of your breathing certainly indicates asthma…But, a resident of Blackheath, Holmes?

Holmes
The mud stains on your cuffs, Mister McFarlane, are a type of clay peculiar to the Norwood area. Because the mud is dry and crusty, you undoubtedly began your journey there and, consequently, must be a resident.

McFarlane
Yes, Mister Holmes. And, at the moment, I am the most unfortunate and unhappy man in England. In heaven’s name, please don’t abandon me. If they come to arrest me before I have finished my story, please make them give me time to finish so that I may tell you the whole truth. I could go to jail happy if I knew that you were working for me on the outside.

Holmes
Arrest you! This is really most gratifying—er—most interesting. On what charge do you expect to be arrested?

McFarlane
Upon the charge of murdering Mister Jonas Oldacre of Lower Norwood. Have you not seen the front page of today’s newspaper?

Watson
We’ve been out for a walk. (He digs for newspaper)

McFarlane
Had you looked at it, Mister Holmes, you would have seen at a glance why I have to run to you this morning. I feel as if my name and my misfortune must be on everyone’s lips…
Watson  
(Reading headlines) “Mysterious Incident at Lower Norwood… Disappearance of Well-Known Builder Jonas Oldacre… Suspicion of Murder and Arson… Clues Point to Suspect.”

Holmes  
Do read on, Doctor.

Watson  
(Reading) “At about twelve o’clock last night an incident occurred at Lower Norwood which seems to point to a serious crime. Well-known resident, architect, and builder of that suburb, Mister Jonas Oldacre is missing and feared murdered. The current assumption is that Mister Oldacre perished in a fire set for the purpose of concealing evidence. An examination of his room revealed the bed had not been slept in, his safe was left open, a number of important papers were scattered about, and that there were signs of a murderous struggle, with slight traces of blood found on the handle of an oak walking stick. The stick found has been identified as belonging to a late visitor at the estate, a tall, young solicitor named John Hector McFarlane, junior partner of Graham and McFarlane. As we go to press— ”

McFarlane  
(Rising) Please, Mister Holmes! I swear to you I am innocent! Please help me…

Watson  
(Continuing) “As we go to press, sensational developments have been reported. Charred remains have been discovered in the ashes of the fire. The police theory is that Mister Oldacre was clubbed to death and that his body was ignited. A warrant has been issued for the arrest of John Hector McFarlane and the investigation is in the experienced hands of Scotland Yard’s Inspector Lestrade, who is said to be following up clues with his accustomed energy and perceptive insight…”

Holmes  
The case has a number of points of interest. May I ask first, Mister McFarlane, how it is you are still at liberty? There seems to be enough evidence to justify your arrest.

McFarlane  
I live at Torrington Lodge in Blackheath with my mother, Mister Holmes. But last night, I had late business with Mister Oldacre and so I stayed at a hotel in Norwood. I knew nothing of this affair until I was in the train and saw at once the terrible position I was in and rushed here from the London Bridge Station to put my situation into your hands.

(Lestrade and Gregson have entered from audience and are banging at the door of the 221 B Baker Street Study)

Lestrade  
Mister Holmes! Open up! (Let him self in: Gregson follows)

Holmes  
Ahh! Inspector Lestrade. We have been expecting you. Do come in!

Lestrade  
Chagrined at having already done so We have, thank you. (To McFarlane) Mister John Hector McFarlane? I arrest you for the willful murder of Mister Jonas Oldacre of Lower Norwood.

McFarlane  
I should like nothing better. All I ask is that you should hear and recognize the absolute truth.

Lestrade  
There shan’t be any difficulty clearing this up, Mister Holmes. It is a simple enough matter. But, nevertheless, with your permission, I should be so very interested in hearing his story.

Holmes  
Well, Mister Oldacre. It is difficult for me to refuse you anything as I must admit you have been of use to the force— once or twice. I suppose we owe you a good turn at Scotland Yard.

Lestrade  
Thank you.

McFarlane  
I must first explain that I knew nothing of Mister Jonas Oldacre. Oh, his name was familiar to me— my parents were evidently acquainted with him years ago— but they drifted apart… And so it came as a complete surprise when yesterday, about three o’clock in the afternoon, he walked into my office… (McFarlane walks into)
OLDACRE meets McFARLANE

Oldacre Good afternoon. I am Jonas Oldacre.

McFARLANE How may I help you, Mister Oldacre?

Oldacre (Handing McFARLANE a bundle of legal papers similar to those seen earlier) This is a draft of my will. I want you, Mister McFarlane, to put it in proper legal shape. I shall sit and wait here while you do so…

McFARLANE (After a pause) But—but I don’t understand. Your entire estate… has been left to me! There must be some mistake. It doesn’t—

Oldacre Now, now, Mister McFarlane. Perhaps I can explain. I’m a bachelor with few relatives. And none who deserve my monetary consideration.

McFARLANE This may well be so, but I—

Oldacre Please, please— let me finish.

McFARLANE Of course, I beg your pardon.

Oldacre For many years now I have been gradually withdrawing from my business. And, if I may say so myself, it has been an extremely successful one. I was an architect and builder. I have amassed considerable wealth and have been able to live out my life in complete, if solitary, comfort…

Many years ago—I knew your mother. In fact—I hoped to marry her. But—it was not to be. She met and married your father.

McFARLANE I— I had no idea.

Oldacre And why should you? Ancient history… Three months ago, I read of your father’s death in the “Morning Chronicle” and my mind turned to your mother… and to the son, who might very well have been—my own… Let’s just say that this is my way of securing your future… I know that whatever I leave will be in good and worthy hands.

McFARLANE (Digesting this)… What can I say?… Except—thank you.

Oldacre There are some papers there you’ll want to examine—building leases, title deeds, mortgages and so on… And now that my mind is made up on this matter, I shan’t rest easy until it is all settled. (Rising) I’ll tell you what. You’ll need time to get this in order, but I would like to complete everything by this evening. Come to my house tonight—shall we say—nine o’clock?

McFARLANE Why, yes.

Oldacre You bring the final will document and then we’ll consider it all set once and for all. All right?

McFARLANE Yes…yes, Mister Oldacre. Of course.

Oldacre (Shaking his hand) Very good, my boy… oh. One last thing… Not a word of this to your dear mother until it is all completed, all right? I’d like it to be a little surprise for her.

McFARLANE You have my word…

(Oldacre regards McFARLANE intently, then exits)

SCENE 3: THE STUDY OF 221 B BAKER STREET

McFARLANE (Re-entering the study) Well, gentlemen, perhaps you can imagine just how astonished I was at this strange and unexpected turn of events. Mister Oldacre was suddenly my benefactor and it became my only desire to carry out his wishes to the letter as quickly as possible. I sent a telegram home to say I had important business on hand and that it was impossible for me to say when I might return. I had some difficulty finding his house and it was nearly half-past nine before I reached it. When I did, he was—

HOLMES One moment— who opened the door?

McFARLANE A woman. I think she must have been his housekeeper.

HOLMES And did she know of your name?

McFARLANE Yes, Mister Holmes. (With walking stick in hand, McFARLANE walks to:)
SCENE 4: A ROOM AT THE ESTATE OF JONAS OLDACRE

McFarlane (To Miss Lexington, who meets him at main stage)  Good evening. I have an appointment with Mister Oldacre.
Lexington  Mister McFarlane… (She takes his walking stick)
McFarlane  Yes. That’s right.
Lexington  This way… (She motions toward upstage and exits)
Oldacre (Entering)  Ahh. I see you brought the papers. Excellent.
McFarlane  Everything is in order, sir.
Oldacre  Very fine. If you’ll join me here at my safe, I’d like to place all these documents together once and for all…
(The safe is opened and Oldacre removes papers. McFarlane ties them together. Using a candle to “melt” wax, he places his seal on the bundle)
Oldacre  All that is lacking is your seal, my boy… Ah, very good… All done.
McFarlane (Placing his thumb on wax seal)  There… Signed, sealed, and delivered.
Oldacre  Well done. I like things in order and now everything is official. (Examining pocket watch)  Goodness, it is rather late, isn’t it? You must be exhausted from all this work and your train trip…
McFarlane  It has been a full day, sir. I’ll just take this copy of the will for the files.
Oldacre  Indeed, indeed. Well, I’ll pay you a visit later in the week and we’ll talk some more then. (Ushering him “out”)  It was indeed awfully good of you to come.
McFarlane  Not at all sir. It is I who owe you a debt of gratitude. Oh… I believe I left my walking stick with — er—
Oldacre  Oh, Miss Lexington probably put it somewhere… who knows where? And she’s undoubtedly retired for the evening. Hmm. I don’t see a stick anywhere…
McFarlane  Rather a heavy walking stick. It belonged to my father…
Oldacre  Oh, never mind. I’ll take care of it and bring it to you next time I see you. After all, we’ll be seeing a lot of each other from now on.
McFarlane  Indeed we shall, sir…
Oldacre  Goodnight, then… (He shakes McFarlane’s hand)
McFarlane  Goodnight, sir. And thank you again… (Oldacre lingers and watches McFarlane walk away. Oldacre exits. McFarlane returns)

SCENE 5: THE STUDY OF 221 B BAKER STREET

McFarlane  And so, gentlemen, I left him there… The safe was left open and the documents were on top. It was too late to return to Blackheath, so I spent the night at Anerly Arms, a hotel there in Norwood… I knew nothing more of this horrible circumstance until this morning.
Holmes  Do you have the original draft of the will Oldacre gave you?
McFarlane  Yes, Mister Holmes… here.  (Music fades)
Holmes (Receiving documents from McFarlane)  Ah, Inspector— may I retain these papers, temporarily, of course?
Lestrade  If it would amuse you, Mister Holmes. (Rising) Anything more you’d like to ask?
Holmes  No. Not until I journey to Blackheath.
Lestrade  You mean to Norwood…
Holmes  Oh, yes, no doubt that is what I must have meant.
Lestrade  Hmm. I think I’d like a private word with you, Mister Holmes. Now, Mister McFarlane, I believe you have an appointment at Scotland Yard. Constable Gregson— you may escort Mister McFarlane to jail.
Gregson (Taking McFarlane by the arm)  Yes, Inspector.
McFarlane (Exiting with Gregson)  Mister Holmes… my life is in your hands, God help me…
Holmes  He most assuredly will. (Holmes examines will documents)
Lestrade  Hmmmmph! It will take an act of God to keep him from swinging at the gallows. Clearly an open and shut case.