

HOUND

By

John Patrick Bray

(Suggested by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Public Domain.)

HOUND

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HOUND

Hound made its world premiere at the Cite des Arts in Lafayette, Louisiana on October 4, 2007. It was produced by HQ Rep. The production ran for three weekends with the following cast:

Sherlock Holmes.....Evan Melancon
Dr. Watson.....Michael Cato
Dr. Mortimer.....Sarah Hitchcock
Sir Henry Baskerville.....Blaine Peltier
Beryl Stapleton/
Mary Watson.....Charlee Halphen
Jack Stapleton.....Joshua Coen
Barrymore.....Tate Stout
Male Chorus (Officer, Seldon.)
.....Heath Swain
Female Chorus
(Mrs. Barrymore, Mrs. Hudson.)...Caroline Randall
Female Chorus 2 (Hound,
Toby, Curly-Haired Spaniel, Boy.)...Kristy Chaisson

The production was directed by Danielle Bienvenue Bray with choreography by Kristy Chaisson and Melinda Hebert.

Hound made its New York City premiere on June 17, 2009 as part of the inaugural Planet Connections Theatre Festivity at the Robert Moss Theatre at 440 Studios (Off-Off Broadway.) The production, an Equity Showcase, was directed by Rachel Klein, and was co-produced by HQ Rep. and Rachel Klein Productions, and was a benefit for RAINN (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network.) It ran for six performances as part of the festival. The cast was as follows:

Sherlock Holmes.....Ryan Knowles
Dr. Watson.....Cavan Hallman
Dr. Mortimer.....Elizabeth Stewart*
Sir Henry Baskerville.....Grant Boyd
Beryl Stapleton/
Mary Watson.....Abigail Hawk*
Jack Stapleton.....Blaine Peltier
Barrymore.....Jack Corcoran
Male Chorus (Officer, Seldon, Boy.)
.....Jason Stroud
Female Chorus
(Mrs. Barrymore, Mrs. Hudson.)...Meredith Dillard
Female Chorus 2 (Hound,
Toby, Curly-Haired Spaniel.).....Alyssa Schroeter

The Production was directed by Rachel Klein.

*Denotes Member of the Actors Equity Association

HOUND

The Characters:

SHERLOCK HOLMES, 30's, a detective.

DR. JOHN WATSON, 30's, a Doctor and widower. He has the ability to communicate with dogs.

Dr. MORTIMER, late 20's, a country physician. (Note: the role can be played by male or female; if male, James. If female, Jane; though written for a man, the part was originated by a young woman, and this draft reflects that change; whichever appeals more for the director, it should be remembered that HOLMES' sexuality exists in a continuum.)

SIR HENRY BASKERVILLE, 28, an American.

BERYL STAPLETON, 20's, STAPLETON's sister. The actress also plays **MARY MORSTAN WATSON**, John WATSON's deceased wife.

JACK STAPLETON, 30's, a naturalist.

BARRYMOORE, 30's-50's, a butler

MALE CHORUS: SELDON; MOUNTED OFFICER; BOY

FEMALE CHORUS 1: MRS. HUDSON; MRS. BARRYMOORE

FEMALE CHORUS 2: CURLY HAired SPANIEL; TOBY; HOUND.

Setting

Various locations in England/ Circa 1899

A Note on the set: in the Off-Off Broadway production, placards on an easel were used to denote location (reflected in script.) but there were no additional set pieces, only props that actors could enter and exit with.

Moments with the Hound were choreographed and set to music.

The play runs without intermission.

HOUND

(A dark stage. A light on PLACARD 1: HOUND. A woman, MARY can be heard laughing. MARY stands under a light, her mouth is badly stitched shut; she can be heard, though her mouth does not move.)

MARY. *(Voice.)* Now, John, you know full well what time it is. *(LIGHTS CHANGE. HOUND stands over HOLMES, frozen.)*

HOLMES. Sir Charles Baskerville suffered a massive coronary, according to the coroner's court. *(LIGHTS CHANGE. MARY is standing over WATSON. Her voice is heard, though she is frozen, her mouth unmoving, her eyes shut.)*

MARY. *(Voice.)* John. John. If you had your way every day would be your holiday. A holiday. *(LIGHTS CHANGE. HOUND stands near MARY, in a vicious pose of attack.)* John...John. *(MARY'S eyes open. A violent shriek. LIGHTS CHANGE to "normal." HOLMES is seated in his chair. WATSON, who has been lying down, sits up. He is wearing yesterday's clothes. PLACARD 2: 221 B BAKER STREET. LIGHTS UP. HOLMES is reading a newspaper aloud.)*

HOLMES. Sir Charles' estate is worth close to...one million pounds. *(He whistles as WATSON 'enters' the room where HOLMES is sitting. WATSON has a limp.)* I hope I did not rouse you by my reading the obituaries aloud. I once knew a Professor who referred to the obituaries as the Irish Sports pages.

WATSON. I wonder which professor that was.

HOLMES. You were dreaming about...her again.

WATSON. *(Beat.)* And what brings you to the 'Irish Sport Pages today?' *(HOLMES turns his back on WATSON to look at the newspapers on his desk.)*

HOLMES. I was boning up a bit on Sir Charles Baskerville. *(WATSON picks up a walking stick.)* We had a visitor last night,

HOUND

whose name is connected with Sir Charles. He left behind that walking stick you're holding. Can you deduce anything from it?

WATSON. I can make numerous observations. My first: you have eyes in the back of your head.

HOLMES. Yes, and at my elbows and heels.

WATSON. (*Indicating towards audience.*) You saw my reflection in the window.

HOLMES. A brave deduction.

WATSON. I am a conductor of light. I radiate your brilliance.

HOLMES. Well, I am a brain, Watson. (*Beat.*) It's what I do.

(*MRS. HUDSON enters.*)

MRS. HUDSON. The young woman who visited last night is here to see you. Would you care for me to bring up some coffee? (*No response. WATSON finishes his drink and moves to pour another.*

HOLMES flips through his newspaper. She turns to the audience.)

We're having one of those days, aren't we? The ones where the maid doesn't exist. But, don't be fooled the maid does exist. So do the butlers, the cabbies, the cooks. Do you never wonder who cooks for the cook? (*To HOLMES and WATSON.*) GENTLEMEN!

HOLMES. Forgive me Mrs. Hudson. For me, nothing at this time, but for Watson, I believe he will take some coffee. (*Confidentially*) His dreams again.

MRS. HUDSON. Doctor, is there anything I can get you besides coffee? (*She sees him take a drink.*)

WATSON. What? Oh, forgive me Mrs. Hudson. No, thank you. (*She nods, and lets MORTIMER in. She is followed by an actor, playing the CURLY HAired SPANIEL.*)

MORTIMER. Mr. Holmes? (*HOLMES takes a bow.*)

CURLY HAired SPANIEL. (*To WATSON.*) Hello.

WATSON. Hello.

MORTIMER. Quit your barking!

WATSON. He was just saying hello.

CURLY HAired SPANIEL. Really.

HOLMES. Watson is a dog person. (*MORTIMER stands in awe and approaches HOLMES.*)

MORTIMER. I see. I just don't abide barking. Especially when

HOUND

my nerves are so... (*MORTIMER goes pale. HOLMES helps her to a seat. WATSON pours a whiskey.*)

WATSON. Steady there. Have this whiskey. I know it is early in the day, but all of us are on edge.

MORTIMER. Thank you. I don't mean to seem so foolish.

HOLMES. Anyone with the weight of death on their shoulders must be given a certain leeway. They cannot be expected to be in full faculties of reason or thought. (*WATSON reacts.*)

MORTIMER. You're too kind I...why I never have seen...such a dolichocephalic skull or such well-marked supra-orbital development.

HOLMES. I get that all of the time.

MORTIMER. Would you have any objection to my running my fingers down your...

HOLMES. My?

MORTIMER. Parietal fissure?

HOLMES. Such a flattering offer. Watson, should I object?

CURLY HAired SPANIEL. (*To WATSON.*) She's married. (*WATSON shrugs.*)

MORTIMER. A cast of your skull? Until the original becomes available.

HOLMES. I'm sorry to let you down, doctor? –

MORTIMER. Mortimer. A humble M.R.C.S. A picker of shells along that great unknown ocean.

HOLMES. My shell shall remain with me for some time. You may have read of my dance with death already?

MORTIMER. Oh, yes! With great interest. With the Irish Professor?

HOLMES. Yes. (*MRS. HUDSON enters with coffee.*)

MRS. HUDSON. Where would you like the coffee? Excuse me? (*Beat. She addresses the audience.*) I do more than just bring coffee you know. I also sweep floors, dust plants, and get in the way.

MORTIMER. Thank you.

WATSON. Thank you, Mrs. Hudson.

MRS. HUDSON. On top of that, I also know how to exit. You

won't be seeing me again. Or maybe you will. Who knows? I really have no place here, other than to bring coffee, and leave. Bring in a guest, and leave. Did you know there really isn't a 'Mr. Hudson?' It's just a name I chose. My real name is Claire. Or was it Jenny? It has been so long. But, I can see none of you are listening. So, Mrs. Hudson I will remain, to enter and exit. Enter and exit. *(She exits.)*

HOLMES. I take it that it was not your lust of my skull that brought you here.

MORTIMER. If I were a bit bolder, I may say yes. I may tell you that

I covet your skull. And nightly, I will imagine it, upon a fireplace that is teamed over with still, soft wax...as if all the candles in London had been let loose to melt upon it. And in the center, in front of a blue wax laden mirror... your perfect skull...in which one can gaze into any of the orifices like a jewel, and be lead myster- iously out another, just to be swept back in. Like a moth in a history book. But, the truth is...well, I have a parchment here I'd like to read to you.

HOLMES. I see. Late eighteenth century? *(MORTIMER gazes at him.)*

MORTIMER. Whenever I hear the words "late eighteenth century," I will think of the way your mouth moved around them. For the rest of my days. *(Beat.)* May I read it to you?

HOLMES. No. *(He takes it from MORTIMER'S hands and looks it over.)* It's a lovely little fairy tale. Watson?

WATSON. Hugo Baskerville...late sixteen hundreds. Raped and killed a local young girl. She called for an angel of heaven to save her. When one did not arrive, she called for an agent of hell. The Hell Hound arrived, and tore the throat of Sir Hugo. Killing him. The dog then killed her as well. Three witnesses lived the rest of their lives broken men, save for the one who died that night from what he saw. Tut, tut, tut. And at the end there is a warning to future Baskervilles: Avoid the moor at night, where the powers of evil are exalted.

HOLMES. And on that note, Watson, will you kiss us both on the

forehead and tuck us in? *(The two men laugh.)*

MORTIMER. Oh, Mr. Holmes. This isn't just a story for amusement. Have you read of the death of Sir Charles Baskerville?

HOLMES. In fact, I have. *(HOLMES waves the paper.)*

WATSON. The Irish Sport Pages.

HOLMES. Heart failure?

MORTIMER. No. Fright. Absolute sheer terror. That parchment you hold was an obsession of his. He never went out on the moor at night. He would never even venture near Yew Alley, due to the darkness. However, on this night, he was there. In the dark. On the edge of the moor. Alone. When we found him, his face was distorted into a hideous shriek! It makes no sense! *(Beat.)* I say again, he never went out on the moor at night. This story of the Hound frightened him so!

WATSON. Perhaps he was out there to catch a glimpse of the predator that made him a prisoner in his own house. Perhaps he had hoped to face this challenge of death, rather live with a shadow over him.

MORTIMER. I had suggested to him to come away to London for a few days, and it was on the eve of his departure that his death occurred. And the most horrific part of all...

HOLMES. The footprints you saw? The ones you failed to mention at the coroner's inquest?

MORTIMER. How could you know?

HOLMES. It is my trade. *(MORTIMER, unable to speak, lets out a squeak.)* Man or woman?

MORTIMER. Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound. *(MARY'S voice whispers 'John.' WATSON reacts.*

MORTIMER and HOLMES turn to look at him.)

WATSON. I'm sorry. I haven't slept much lately. The slightest noise can make me dizzy.

MORTIMER. I did not hear anything.

CURLY HAIRD SPANIEL. I hear a woman crying at night. At the Baskerville Estate.

WATSON. A woman?

CURLY HAIRD SPANIEL. Some of us believe it is the ghost

of the murdered girl. That she follows the hound, pleading with him.

HOLMES. If you believe this agent of Hell was the cause of Sir Charles' death, you would be better off to consult a priest.

MORTIMER. No. It's not Sir Charles I'm worried about. It's Sir Henry, his nephew and sole heir. Sir Charles had two brothers: Roger and James. James had one son, Sir Henry. Roger died in central America. Some time ago. Syphilis. A defrocked priest. Absolute disgrace. He had no children. Just several whores.

HOLMES. Ah. And what would you like me to do with Sir Henry?

MORTIMER. Help me warn him of this curse. Help me persuade him...that...that...

HOLMES. Of course. Watson? (*WATSON pours another glass of Whiskey and hands it to MORTIMER.*) You do realize, I solve crimes. If a crime is not committed-

MORTIMER. We must *prevent* the crime, Mr. Holmes! When I was a child, Sir Henry and I were very close. I had spent several summers with him as a child, up in Canada. It was so beautiful...so innocent. I cannot let anything befall him. I feel I have already let Sir Charles down by allowing such a fate... (*HOLMES and WATSON share a glance.*)

WATSON. When is Sir Henry due to arrive?

MORTIMER. In an hour. I am to meet him at the Northumberland Hotel.

HOLMES. Splendid. (*Beat.*) Go meet Sir Henry. We will be there to take a late breakfast with you at eleven thirty.

MORTIMER. Mr. Holmes! Thank you!

HOLMES. Let Sir Henry know everything that you have laid before us, omitting the footprints of the hound.

MORTIMER. Oh?

HOLMES. Also let him know of our intentions to join you.

MORTIMER. I shall! I shall! Mr. Holmes? (*MORTIMER pauses. She extends her arms and runs her fingers along the sides of HOLMES' nose. The CURLY HAired SPANIEL sighs deeply and shakes her head. HOLMES grabs MORTIMER's arms.*)

HOUND

MORTIMER pulls away.) Thank you! (She exits. HOLMES and WATSON look at each other.)

CURLY HAired SPANIEL. *(To WATSON)* She really should learn how to behave.

HOLMES. Five...four...three...two... *(MORTIMER re-enters, grabs her cane, motions to her dog, and they exit. A beat.)* Ha! A hound of hell? Are we to believe in such things? This firm must stay planted on the ground. The world is big enough for us to deal with, no ghosts need apply.

WATSON. Well, if there is a Hell Hound, then there is a hell. And if there's a hell, then there's the other side- *(MARY'S VOICE whispers 'John.')*

HOLMES. We are men of science...John. If there is a Hound, we shall find it and kill it.

WATSON. What if it cannot be killed? *(Lights change)*

PLACARD 3: NORTHUMBERLAND HOTEL. SIR HENRY is pacing back and forth in his Hotel Room. HOLMES is reading over a letter. WATSON is smoking a cigarette, and looking out the window.

SIR HENRY. I feel as if I'm stuck in a dime store novel. And not a very good one at that.

HOLMES. You say you received this message when? Watson. *(HOLMES hands the note to WATSON.)*

SIR HENRY. Just after I noticed my boot was missing.

HOLMES. Your boot?

SIR HENRY. My new boot.

HOLMES. New boot.

SIR HENRY. I sent them the pair out to be varnished, and one vanished!

WATSON. *(Reading.)* "As you value your life and reason, be sure to avoid the moor."

HOLMES. Yes, the font is unmistakable. These words were cut from Yesterday's Times. However, whoever wrote this letter could not find the word 'moor,' thus the reason why it is written in.

SIR HENRY. Isn't that smart!

HOLMES. This person is neat of habit, but feared discovery, which is why the note, so carefully clipped and folded, was stuffed rather obtusely into the envelope. I suggest it is a friendly warning. There is nothing supernatural in this.

SIR HENRY. Supernatural?

HOLMES. I best let Ms. Mortimer explain the curse upon her arrival.

SIR HENRY. The curse? *(Beat.)* Oh, you mean the curse of the Baskervilles. The hound. I know all about it, Mr. Holmes, and my late Uncle's obsession. It has always been an obsession of his.

HOLMES. You do not take stock in this fable then?

SIR HENRY. Of course not. 'Sides, there is no demon in hell that can keep me away from the land of my people.

WATSON. Stout fellow!

HOLMES. Does anyone else know of your arrival?

SIR HENRY. Only my uncle's butler, Barrymoore.

HOLMES. Watson, send a telegram to Baskerville Hall. If Barrymoore receives it, we can rule him out. *(MORTIMER enters.)*

MORTIMER. Mr. Homes! Henry! *(She shakes hands with SIR HENRY.)* I am very pleased to see you. Mr. Holmes, look, out that window...

HOLMES. That cab followed you?

MORTIMER. Yes! I tried to ditch him, but I became frightened. I thought of your strong arms around me –

HOLMES. Watson, stay here with Sir Henry. If you do not hear from me, meet me back at Baker Street in one hour! *(HOLMES dashes off. WATSON follows after him. SIR HENRY notices something. WATSON goes pale.)*

MORTIMER. Watson?

WATSON. Nothing. I'm just. I thought I smelled Jasmine. That's what Mary wore.

SIR HENRY. Hello!

WATSON. What is it? *(SIR HENRY picks up a boot.)* This...this is my missing boot!

MORTIMER. It must have been here the whole time! *(They*

chuckle.)

SIR HENRY. Wait a moment... *(He looks at another boot.)*

Now...Now I'm missing one of the old ones!

MORTIMER. Boots don't just get up and walk away!

SIR HENRY. *(Beat.)* Ghosts?

MORTIMER. Watson, what do you make of it? *(No response.)*
Watson?

WATSON. *(To himself.)* The smell of Jasmine. *(Lights change.)*

PLACARD 4: BACK AT BAKER STREET. HOLMES is sitting, laughing. WATSON joins him.

HOLMES. And I ask the cabby who the passenger was, and the passenger had said to him 'you may be interested to know that you've been driving around Mr. Sherlock Holmes!' Delicious! This imposter must know that I will not rest until he is beaten.

WATSON. Which is why you're not joining Sir Henry and I to Dartmoor?

HOLMES. I told you, I have a case of blackmail. Besides, I have been there. In spirit anyway. *(HOLMES brings WATSON over to the easel, and removes PLACARD 4. PLACARD 5: A MAP OF DARTMOOR - DRAWN IN WHITE WITH LABELS.)* Notice this cluster of houses. Grimpen. And here is the Tor, the center of the moor. Baskerville Manor.

WATSON. Ghastly.

HOLMES. It is a worthy setting if the devil decided to dabble in the affairs of men.

WATSON. 'We are men of science.'

HOLMES. A metaphor, Watson, simply a metaphor. *(Beat.)* A letter, a missing boot...can a hound do these things, Watson?

WATSON. No...but maybe the girl, the one from the moor...or...

HOLMES. Or? *(Beat.)* I see. *(Beat.)* Oh, Watson, in all honesty, I cannot ask you to do this.

WATSON. Why not?

HOLMES. If there is truly danger there, I can't have you just walk into it.

WATSON. Do you really think that bothers me?

HOLMES. Of course not. However...I am not certain you are in a proper state –

WATSON. Proper state!

HOLMES. And I would not forgive myself if you were brought into the clutches of evil itself!

WATSON. Evil itself?

HOLMES. Human evil! Non-supernatural human evil!

WATSON. Holmes, you know something, don't you? Something you're not telling me? Or is it that you don't have the answer?

(Beat) How often have you said when you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable must be the truth?

HOLMES. I am not prepared to eliminate the human element. The *living* human element. *(WATSON looks stunned.)* Forgive me for...anyway, all of this is besides the fact! There is a danger out there, some danger, and that danger is pointed to Sir Henry Baskerville. He needs protection, not someone looking to stare at death the way his uncle did.

WATSON. And what would I be then, a tethered goat while you stand back and watch what happens? Do not think for a moment that I am your maid. *(MRS. HUDSON enters.)*

MRS. HUDSON. I am his maid!

WATSON. I do not give into your wants and will.

MRS. HUDSON. Neither do I, really.

WATSON. I do not carry out your orders.

MRS. HUDSON. Technically, I am a housekeeper, and landlord.

WATSON. I am doing this to protect a life, yes.

MRS. HUDSON. I am doing this because it is my life.

WATSON. Not to serve your ego.

MRS. HUDSON. I serve his ego coffee and poached eggs.

WATSON. I am however, your friend, and as a friend, I take your caution with respect.

MRS. HUDSON. I do not have any friends.

WATSON. After all, you saved me from mental collapse.

MRS. HUDSON. After all, I'm only a maid. *(MRS. HUDSON*

exits.)

WATSON. When Mary died. It was not the least bit graceful. It was slow. It was...agonizing. I am a Doctor. I have recently been hired by the military to perfect their uniforms. I am constructing new tin hats, which will ensure safety from attacks in trees. I have been developing vests that contain air, as a way of saving soldiers from drowning. I have been busy publishing article after article about the effects of typhoid fever, and I could not save her. I could not stop her suffering. I watched the fiery glow flicker out from her yellow eyes. Her body tightened and seemed to become bluer, and weightless. That is *evil itself*. I watched her soul slip away. To where? I do not know. But, if there is a Hell Hound, if it is out there, it may be the key. To finding out, and you cannot take that away from me! (*HOLMES sighs deeply.*) But, out of respect and consideration for you, I will not wonder out onto the moor alone. (*HOLMES approaches him.*)

HOLMES. If I were your wife, my dear fellow, I would simply worry about you.

WATSON. I know that. Thank you, Holmes. (*A moment. HOLMES breaks it.*)

HOLMES. Write me daily. Present all of the facts to me as facts. Meet the locals, townspeople; notice the habits of the staff, every minute detail –

WATSON. Yes, yes.

HOLMES. And above all, avoid the moor, where, as the old parchment warns, the powers of evil are exalted. Whether natural or supernatural. (*Lights change.*)

PLACARD 6: CROSSING THE MOOR. SIR HENRY, MORTIMER, Curly-Haired Spaniel, and WATSON are in a dog-cart. Dr. MORTIMER is driving. This can be represented with three chairs, or just with the actors standing, vibrating.

WATSON. And you have never seen the moor?

SIR HENRY. Not yet. When I was young, I lived on the South

Coast with my father. And when he passed away, I made my way to America with my Nurse. We lived with her family on a farm in Canada. Incredible Journey. Later, I would move to Texas.

MORTIMER. Have you ever meet your other Uncle, Roger?

SIR HENRY. *(Beat.)* Yes. I spent a summer with him. He became a Priest. It is not like me to talk ill of a man of God, but he had succumbed to drink. He passed away some time ago. Forgive me.

MORTIMER. Not too many folks knew him, that's the only reason I ask. I did not mean to intrude on your personal business.

(Beat.) You say you've never seen the moor?

SIR HENRY. No.

MORTIMER. There it is.

SIR HENRY. Ah. Cheery.

MORTIMER. It looks better when there's sunshine.

SIR HENRY. Is there ever sunshine?

CURLY HAIREED SPANIEL. It's so beautiful. So many large rocks one can frolic on. So many secrets inside. What, what is that? Do you see it, Watson?

WATSON. Bright patches of green light.

CURLY HAIREED SPANIEL. The green light. The color of life, and of the hound. I have seen the hound, Watson.

WATSON. Really?

CURLY HAIREED SPANIEL. Sniffing around my Master's Garden one night. Just after Sir Charles left. I vowed to protect my Master from that night on. I still don't sleep. I'm a dog, it's what I do.

MORTIMER. Settle down, girl. What's gotten into you?

WATSON. Maybe a nice shot of brandy would do the trick.

CURLY HAIREED SPANIEL. There it is again! A green flutter over the moor! *(CURLY HAIREED SPANIEL dashes away, offstage.)*

WATSON. Wait!

MORTIMER. Curly! *(MORTIMER nearly drops the reins. The dog yelps offstage. DR. MORTIMER pulls the reins.)*

SIR HENRY. What is that?

MORTIMER. The Grimpen mire! COME BACK HERE! *(SIR*

HENRY holds MORTIMER back.)

SIR HENRY. Don't be a fool! That bog is like quicksand! It'll pull you right under!

WATSON. How do you know?

SIR HENRY. I've heard many a tale. Look! *(Dog howls.)*

MORTIMER. Curly you crazy bitch! *(WATSON helps to restrain DR. MORTIMER.)*

SIR HENRY. If you go in after her, you'll be swallowed up as well! *(Dog howls and yowls.)*

CURLY HAired SPANIEL. *(Offstage)* Master! Please! I would save you! *(WATSON removes his service revolver.)*

WATSON. I'm sorry, my friend.

CURLY HAired SPANIEL. So...cold. *(WATSON fires his gun. The yelping stops.)*

WATSON. I'm sorry.

MORTIMER. No! No! Why?!

WATSON. As opposed to watching the creature suffer.

MORTIMER. We could have –

WATSON. There was nothing we could have done! Look at the moor! Nothing...nothing. *(A MOUNTED OFFICER approaches them.)*

MOUNTED OFFICER. Oy! Did I hear a gunshot?

WATSON. My friend's dog went into the mire. I did the dog a service.

MOUNTED OFFICER. Oh. Well you might be doing me a service! No shooting.

WATSON. Yes, sir.

SIR HENRY. Why are there mounted officers out here?

MOUNTED OFFICER. Still looking for the escaped convict.

SIR HENRY. Convict?

MORTIMER. You are also witnessing the funeral of one of the greatest pets...I need to step down... *(MORTIMER gets out of the cab, and walks down stage.)*

MOUNTED OFFICER. It's Seldon, Sir. He's still out on the moor.

WATSON. SELDON!

SIR HENRY. Who?

WATSON. A man of such savagery.

SIR HENRY. You know of him?

WATSON. He's infamous. He ingests the raw organs of his victims.

SIR HENRY. Monster! And they have not hanged him?

WATSON. No. He was deemed insane, and sent to the penitentiary here. To never see daylight again. To live in the closed, cold, damp mouth of hell itself.

MOUNTED OFFICER. Like living in a tomb, it is. Much worse, I suppose, than a quick and painless death by hanging.

SIR HENRY. Charming. How did he escape?

MOUNTED OFFICER. He chewed his way out...through seven guards! *(Beat.)* The point is gentlemen: No pistol shots. You'll scare him off. He's out there somewhere. The way I see it, it has been a few days. We have men all around. He'll come out or he'll starve. *(MOUNTED OFFICER approaches MORTIMER.)* But, then let the moor have him. Sink right into the belly of the earth. Trapped in there, in that sticky mire...

LIGHTS CHANGE. MOUNTED OFFICER exits. WATSON is now driving the dog-cart as they approach Baskerville Hall.

MORTIMER. And there's Baskerville Hall.

SIR HENRY. I can barely see my hand in front of me.

WATSON. It's only an outline. The shadow of a ghost.

SIR HENRY. Was it here? That my uncle...?

MORTIMER. No. It was in Yew Alley. On the other side. I'm sorry, it's my dog. I'm still lost in thoughts of her. She was so...so beautiful. And her skull now has a bullet mark. Imperfect, but I will one day find her skull, and make it my dining room centerpiece. She was so...hairly.

WATSON. I cannot even make out the road ahead of us.

SIR HENRY. The real problem with this place is the lack of illumination. I shall have a row of electric lamps leading up to the front. Bring us into the twentieth century. Cheery. Bright.

WATSON. Luminous.

SIR HENRY. Yes, that is the word.

MORTIMER. In my dreams, I used to bite her nose off. It didn't hurt her, really. It just made her have a patch of white fur where her nose would be. And I would make fun of her, with her nose in my teeth. Not quite crunchy like an insect...not quite chewy like candy...but I'd always put it back...it was always in good fun... *(Beat.)* I see Barrymoore signaling ahead.

SIR HENRY. My uncle's butler! It'll be nice to see him again.

WATSON. He's your butler now.

SIR HENRY. Yes. So strange. I have a butler.

WATSON. He is...but, why is he looking over there?

MORTIMER. To the Tor? He's probably having trouble seeing the road in front of him. *(SIR HENRY and WATSON get off the cart.)* I'm sorry I can't dine with you gentlemen. I am in no mood for eating. Especially with my dog...and there...there is Yew Alley. I...I need to go. My husband is expecting me. Goodnight. *(Lights change.)*

*MORTIMER exits. PLACARD 7: BASKERVILLE HALL.
BARRYMOORE and Mrs. BARRYMOORE enter.*

BARRYMOORE. Hello, Sir Henry. I am Barrymoore. This is my wife, Mrs. Barrymoore.

WATSON. I say, do you have a sister in London?

MRS. BARRYMOORE. No, sir, I only have a brother. And he ain't in London. *(BARRYMOORE looks at her.)*

SIR HENRY. It's a pleasure to meet you both. This is Dr. Watson, he will be staying with me tonight.

BARRYMOORE. Very good, sir.

SIR HENRY. *(Looking out to audience. Whistles.)* Look at all of them paintings. Every Baskerville.

BARRYMOORE. Except for your Uncle Roger, sir. He wished his portrait to be removed.

SIR HENRY. Good.

WATSON. Good?

SIR HENRY. He didn't have such a friendly face. Although all of those eyes look...lost, ominous. As if I'm next for something.

(Pause.)

BARRYMOORE. Do you wish dinner to be served?

SIR HENRY. Is it ready?

BARRYMOORE. In a few minutes, Sir. You will find Hot Water in your rooms. *(MRS. BARRYMOORE exits. BARRYMOORE turns to walk away, stops, then turns around.)* You really do have your Uncle's Face, Sir Henry.

SIR HENRY. My uncle?

BARRYMOORE. Sir Charles. *(Points to a portrait.)*

SIR HENRY. Oh. Thank you.

BARRYMOORE. He was a very dear man to my wife and I. And if I had a son of my own, out of respect to your family, I would ask him to stay on to look after you.

SIR HENRY. What? You aren't leaving my employ?

BARRYMOORE. My wife and I will never be at peace at Baskerville Hall. Too many painful memories. That night. The footprints in the mud. Tip toes. The man was tip-toeing back to the house.

WATSON. How did you deduce that?

BARRYMOORE. The heels of his shoes made no imprint on the ground. Just the tips, sir. *(BARRYMOORE demonstrates standing on his toes.)*

WATSON. Very good, Barrymoore.

SIR HENRY. But, Barrymoore, what will you do?

BARRYMOORE. Sir Charles, rest his soul, left us a token of his generosity. Enough that we may set ourselves up in a sort of business.

SIR HENRY. Wonderful, Barrymoore. I will not stop you from living a free and happy life. Maybe one day we will enjoy a wine together at your new establishment.

BARRYMOORE. That is the idea, sir. Thank you. *(BARRYMOORE exits.)*

SIR HENRY. Tip toes?

WATSON. No. He was running. Running for his life. Running until his heart burst. *(SIR HENRY looks down.)* Let us not speak of

it anymore tonight.

SIR HENRY. Look at this place. I suppose one can tone it down, but at present I cannot imagine a painting of myself hanging on the wall.

WATSON. Apparently neither could your Uncle Roger. *(Pause.)*

SIR HENRY. Let us take supper, and call it an early night. I will dream of sunshine. Or electricity. *(SIR HENRY exits. WATSON stands a lone for a moment. There is the sob of a woman.)*

WATSON. Mary? Mary is that you? *(He walks quietly.)* Mary, don't cry! I'm here for you! Please...please don't cry. *(Blackout)*

PLACARD 8: THE NEXT MORNING. LIGHTS UP. It is morning, gay and bright. SIR HENRY is smiling over his breakfast. WATSON enters.

SIR HENRY. And good morning to you, sir!

WATSON. Did you sleep?

SIR HENRY. Like a lamb, like a lamb!

WATSON. Excellent.

SIR HENRY. And you?

WATSON. I had some trouble. But I often times have difficulty sleeping in new places. After my wife died and I moved back in with Holmes, I could not sleep for an entire month. I still have dreams of her crying.

SIR HENRY. On that topic, did you hear crying in the night?

BARRYMOORE! *(WATSON goes pale. BARRYMOORE enters.)*
Did you hear a woman crying in the night?

BARRYMOORE. No, sir.

SIR HENRY. Is there anyone else in this house besides you and your wife?

BARRYMOORE. No, sir. But, there are sounds in this old house. There is an old organ in the East Wing.

SIR HENRY. *(Beat.)* An organ?

BARRYMOORE. *(Ominously.)* Yes, sir. It hasn't been played in some time. Occasionally, a breeze passes through that room. I'm sure that could be mistaken for crying, sir.

SIR HENRY. My Uncle Roger was a fan of the organ.

BARRYMOORE. *(A little nervous.)* That he was, sir. He used to give lessons as a young man to the boys of Dartmoor. He even tried to persuade me to have a lesson or two...but some men just aren't meant to play the organ, sir. *(Pause.)*

SIR HENRY. I suppose you're right. Thank you, Barrymoore. *(BARRYMOORE turns to exit.)* Oh, Barrymoore? I have some excellent American suits on my bed. As a token of good wishes, I would like you to have them. Besides, I am dressing as the English Squire now, and I cannot think of a better way of saying thank you for your generosity to my Uncle Charles.

BARRYMOORE. Very good, sir. Thank you, sir. *(BARRYMOORE exits.)*

WATSON. I must make my way to the post office. Holmes instructed me not to let you out of my sight, so you best come along.

SIR HENRY. Oh, Watson. I am not up for such a long walk. Do go off by yourself.

WATSON. Holmes told me -

SIR HENRY. It is daytime! What harm ever comes with glorious sunshine? I will sit here, so help me God, and read over my Uncle's journals. There is a lot of work with that comes with operating an estate, and I will be up to my elbows for at least the next month.

WATSON. Very well, then. Do not leave this house.

SIR HENRY. You can trust me! *(WATSON nods and exits.)* Yes, sir. What harm can come? Not to a man, no no no. *(The sound of an organ.)* Maybe to a boy. Yes, a boy. Oh, God. Why now? Why do I remember it now? *(LIGHTS CHANGE. BARRYMOORE is in the doorway of WATSON'S room. MRS. BARRYMOORE is pleading with him. BARRYMOORE agrees with whatever she is asking. She exits, sadly. BARRYMOORE enters WATSON'S room, and finds a couple of letters. WATSON enters and catches him. The organ sound turns into a woman crying. BARRYMOORE turns and sees WATSON. A moment between them.)*

WATSON. That first sound was unmistakably an organ. But the

second was a woman crying. Listen. (*The sounds have stopped.*)

BARRYMOORE. I know all of the old sounds of this house, Sir. Every echo. And if there were a ghost of a woman crying, I would know about it.

WATSON. Do you know of a woman who has been seen upon the moor? (*Pause.*)

BARRYMOORE. None, sir.

WATSON. It has been suggested that it is the ghost of the girl who was killed by the hound.

BARRYMOORE. You are not from this area, sir, but do understand that those of us who live here do not like to discuss such matters, sir.

WATSON. I do mean no offense. (*Takes the letters from BARRYMOORE.*)

BARRYMOORE. Very good, sir.

WATSON. You will keep an eye on him until I return.

BARRYMOORE. Of course. (*The sound of the organ plays, merrily.*) It sounds like he's practicing, sir.

WATSON. Make sure he doesn't leave. (*WATSON exits.*)

BARRYMOORE. I'm a butler. It's what I do. (*The organ plays a violent note and stops. BARRYMOORE exits calling to SIR HENRY.*) SIR HENRY? SIR HENRY? (*He enters.*) Sir Henry? (*Beat.*) Where the devil could he have gone? (*Lights change.*)

PLACARD 9: THE POST OFFICE. WATSON is talking to a BOY outside of a post office.

WATSON. And you delivered the telegram to Barrymoore himself?

BOY. No, sir. Mr. Barrymoore was upstairs. I delivered it to his wife. But, I swore I saw him.

WATSON. Saw him?

BOY. Or I heard him anyway. Sounded like he was breathing heavy. Huffing and puffing in the kitchen. What kinda case is Mr. Sherlock Holmes taking on?

WATSON. You'll have to read about it.

BOY. When?

WATSON. I always wait for four years to pass. That way I can present all of the facts, and feel no guilt. You should never feel guilt about anything that happened four years ago.

BOY. My father said the same thing to my mother, when she found out about him being in bed with the barmaid.

WATSON. She forgave him?

BOY. She shot him. (*WATSON gives the BOY a penny.*)

WATSON. Compliments of Mr. Holmes.

BOY. Well, blow me down! Thank you! Hey mum! (*BOY exits.*)

PLACARD 10: THE MOOR. WATSON starts walking. Lights change to represent the passing of time. WATSON is writing in a journal.)

WATSON. Sent a letter to Holmes. The dangers of the night before seem to have left, and now I stand before the mire in all of its beauty. There is a seduction to it. I'm sure Mary would see it. Mary... (*He pauses. He removes a flask from his hip pocket, and drinks. He returns the flask to his pocket, and continues to write.*) Maybe she does see it. Was it she who was crying in Baskerville Hall? Or was it the ghost of the woman? (*STAPLETON runs on stage at the end of this sentence. He can be heard before he is seen.*)

STAPLETON. Dr. Watson! I say, Dr. Watson!

WATSON. Yes?

STAPLETON. I beg your pardon; I do not mean to be presumptuous. You are the author, Dr. Watson, are you not?

WATSON. I am the author Dr. Watson, and at times, I am even the doctor Dr. Watson.

STAPLETON. Forgive my intrusion. I am Stapleton of Merripit House.

WATSON. Your net and your box have told me as much. Dr. Mortimer had mentioned you earlier. Stapleton, the naturalist.

STAPLETON. I had been...visiting Dr. Mortimer. She pointed you out to me as you passed her window.

WATSON. I see.

STAPLETON. Mortimer and I were discussing why the baronet would want to plant himself in such a hell as this. Oh, the mornings are fine, but in the evenings, the night is so still, you can hear the faded cry of voices from long ago.

WATSON. What voices?

STAPLETON. I hear children. I am talking of the burden that each man may carry. They seem to develop into fully realized entities here. It's enough to drive one mad.

WATSON. Why do you stay here if you feel so strongly against it?

STAPLETON. I have been here but two years and already her beauty has swall-owed me whole. She is so mysterious, and barren. Naked. Beautiful. Look at her. Those grown, soft patches, like thickets of feminine hair...I'm a poet as well... that's Grimpen Mire. I have seen so many moor ponies step into her, and get pulled in. Deeper and deeper inside of her. Struggling at first, but then at last succumbing to her beautiful grip, and slow pull under.

WATSON. And why are we heading into it?

STAPLETON. I know a path to the center. I am the only one who can walk along her safely. She is like a lover. Just please...don't tell my sister. *(Beat.)* This path leads back to Merripit House. If you spare me an hour, I would love for you to join me. You can meet my sister, and my collection of rare butterflies. *(Lights up on HOLMES.)*

HOLMES. Meet the locals...*(Blackout on HOLMES.)*

WATSON. Why not?

STAPLETON. Splendid! My sister will have tea for us. Walk this way. Step exactly where I'm stepping. *(STAPLETON walks. WATSON imitates. There is a howl of a dog.)*

WATSON. What is that?

STAPLETON. There are a lot of strange sounds that come from the moor. It could be wind from the mine at the center of the mire. An ancient civilization, long forgotten by modern man. There are some folks who say that it is the Hound of the Baskervilles.

WATSON. Do you believe it?

STAPLETON. I haven't quite made up my mind. What does Sir Henry think?

WATSON. Sir Henry hails from America. There they have headless horseman and cannibalistic natives. They have no need for Hounds of Hell.

STAPLETON. I'm glad to hear it. Sir Charles was in weak health, you know. The sight of any dog might have sent him into his panic. The night of his death, we had set up a party for him. He was going to spend a few months in London, as a way of getting back in touch with civilization, and as a way of leaving this mumbo jumbo behind. Alas the day.

WATSON. Alas.

STAPLETON. And what does Mr. Holmes think of all of this?

WATSON. Mr. Holmes?

STAPLETON. Please, Dr. Watson. You are here. It doesn't take a detective to figure out he cannot be far behind.

WATSON. Mr. Holmes is entirely interested in Hell Hounds.

STAPLETON. Really?

WATSON. Certainly. The moment I mentioned that I was to visit my friend Henry, and spoke of the hound, he erupted in a fit of laughter, waved his arms, picked up his violin, and amused himself for the rest of the evening.

STAPLETON. You are very right to put me off, Dr. Watson. However, I am sure the time will come when we'll get to see the great Sherlock Holmes, with that pipe and funny hat, combing the marshes for clues, motives, and the other sorts of mischief that you write about in your stories. Unless of course, he has sent you in his stead?

WATSON. For the last time, no, he – *(A butterfly floats near them.)*

STAPLETON. Look! Cyclopedes! My old nemesis! You shall not escape me this time! *(STAPLETON runs off stage wielding his net.)*

WATSON. STAPLETON? STAPLETON?! *(A HOUND howls.)* 'What harm can possibly happen during the day?' Where the Hell are you, HOLMES? HOUND? MARY? Cyclopedes? *(Slight*

pause.) Shit. *(He reaches into his hip pocket again, and takes a drink. He starts to walk on again, obviously finishing the contents of the flask when a woman's voice calls to him.)*

BERYL. Stop! I implore you! *(He drops his flask.)*

WATSON. *(To himself.)* Mary? *(BERYL STAPLETON runs on. WATSON reacts.)*

BERYL. You must get away from here! Turn back and leave this place as once. *(The effects of alcohol are starting to hit WATSON.)*

WATSON. Why should I? Lovely weather for this time of hell.

BERYL. It is no joke! Get back to London as fast as you can, and never again set foot upon this moor.

WATSON. I like it. It's squishy.

BERYL. Damn you! Hush, here comes my brother. And as you can see, the lilacs bloom over this hill –

WATSON. -and the Wolf's Bane over there. Maybe a nice field of Garlic Cloves for the – *(STAPLETON enters.)*

BERYL. Oh, Jack! There you are. I was just explaining to Sir Henry's friend all of the wonderful plants and wildlife that grows along the moor. Beautiful.

STAPLETON. This is my sister, Beryl...There! Cyclopedias! My old enemy. Now, will you fall! *(STAPLETON runs off.)*

WATSON. So, why the warning?

BERYL. You do not know of the hound?

WATSON. Of course I do. But that has not presented me with a reason to live in fear.

BERYL. I do live in fear. At night, I lay alone and shudder.

WATSON. Pardon my being so bold, but why has no man claimed you? *(She turns to him.)*

BERYL. My brother is all the company I need.

WATSON. Surely, you are mistaken. There are men, great men in this world.

BERYL. My brother is a great man.

WATSON. But he is not the kind of love that can hold you at night, to ease your trembling. I know of what I speak. I do hope you will change your mind once the right man has come along.

BERYL. Are you suggesting to me that you are the right man?

WATSON. Alas, no. I no longer have...the function of a man. I just have not lost hope for young women in the world. *(She takes his hand and notices the ring on his finger.)*

BERYL. And what of your wife?

WATSON. She is dead. *(Beat.)* I imagine her in Heaven. With clouds of angels, teaming to the surface of the kingdom. All naked, and smiling, with their legs open. Her arms outstretched; calling to me. And I can never reach her...maybe that is what hell is. Being chained to the earth. If that is the case, do we need to fear a hound? And do you need to live a life without love? *(BERYL grows quiet.)*

BERYL. My brother likes the idea of a resident in Baskerville Hall. This town really cannot function without one. With a younger man, there will be more positions open for servants, and perhaps a general calm will return to our lives.

WATSON. I see.

BERYL. He would be angry if he heard of me warning off Sir Henry. Do not make him angry at me. It's all too much.

WATSON. All too much? But isn't he a great man? *(She runs off. STAPLETON enters.)*

STAPLETON. Where the deuce is Beryl?

WATSON. Ms. Stapleton is on her way back to Merripit.

STAPLETON. *(Beat.)* You must forgive us. We are...we were once a young and happy pair of siblings. We had a school together. We taught the youngest, ripest, and proudest young stock in all of England. But then the typhoid fever broke out. Are you familiar with it?

WATSON. Very.

STAPLETON. And we lost half of our children. Their tiny voices silenced, except for in here *(Points to his head.)* It has caused us to live modestly, but not unhappily. You will forgive me if we postpone tea until another time? And do believe there will be another time?

WATSON. I most certainly believe I will have the occasion to enter your house. *(They smile at each other. The sound of the HOUND. WATSON continues to smile and takes a longer blink.)*

Lights change.)

STAPLETON EXITS. WATSON takes out a notebook and begins to write. Lights change. WATSON walks to the easel. PLACARD 11: WATSON IS LOST. He reacts. PLACARD 12: WASTSON IS STILL LOST. He reacts. WATSON wanders around, lost.

WATSON. If I ever find my way out of here...I'll kill Stapleton...then Holmes...then every dog I meet up with to the end of my days... (*SIR HENRY and BERYL enter, laughing. WATSON positions himself so he cannot be seen.*)

BERYL. You mustn't say such things...

SIR HENRY. But why?

BERYL. It has been said that when words of love are spoken, they carry for miles into the night.

SIR HENRY. Good. Then our words will wash away all that there is to fear, and replace it, with –

BERYL. No. I should not have kept you.

SIR HENRY. You haven't kept me. Your sweet smelling hair. I want to build a nest in it.

BERYL. Or a grave.

SIR HENRY. What?

BERYL. You are too kind. You are too...too...too kind. My brother –

SIR HENRY. Your brother?

BERYL. He would not approve of this.

SIR HENRY. Why not?

BERYL. Because...do I really have to tell you?

SIR HENRY. Ah. I wish the hound would eat me and have it done then.

BERYL. Don't say that.

SIR HENRY. If I can't have you, then it might as well. (*Whistles for the dog.*)

BERYL. (*Interrupting.*) Don't say that.

SIR HENRY. What can I say?

BERYL. Don't say anything. (*He pulls her close.*) Why?

HOUND

SIR HENRY. I'm a lover. It's what I do. *(He kisses her. The HOUND howls.)*

BERYL. Oh, God, Henry! Run!

SIR HENRY. What?

BERYL. Run for your life! *(She runs off.)*

SIR HENRY. BERYL! *(The HOUND howls. SIR HENRY looks after BERYL. He watches a bit, and follows. Lights change).*

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