

**Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the  
Elusive Ear**

by

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### Setting

The rooms of Sherlock Holmes.

### Time

December 1888.

### Cast

SHERLOCK HOLMES - Consulting detective in his 30s-50s.  
DR. JOHN WATSON - Physician and author in his 30s-50s.  
IRENE ADLER - Adventuress in her 30s-50s (although strictly speaking, "A Scandal in Bohemia" has her born in 1858.)  
VINCENT VAN GOGH - Post-Impressionist painter, 35 years old (but leeway on either side of this age is fine).  
MARIE CHARTIER - Client in her 20s-30s.  
OSCAR WILDE - Writer and wit, 34 years old (but leeway on either side of this age is fine).

NOTES: On the subject of accents, productions are free to address these as they wish. If authenticity is desired:

SHERLOCK HOLMES - Upper-class Oxford/Cambridge English accent.  
JOHN WATSON - English accent, perhaps with a slight Scottish brogue thrown in, as he received his Bachelor of Medicine degree from Edinburgh University.  
IRENE ADLER - Upper-class American accent, as she is an opera singer who was born in New Jersey.  
VINCENT VAN GOGH - Dutch accent.  
MARIE CHARTIER - French accent.  
OSCAR WILDE - An English society drawl, with only the hint of an Irish brogue, as Wilde had consciously made an effort to eradicate his Irish accent while he was a student at Oxford University.

The tune for the Dutch folk song, "Galathea, siet den dach comt aen" can be found on the internet.

## ACT ONE

(Lights up on the iconic rooms of 221B Baker Street. All of the vivid details from the original stories are here: a fireplace with correspondence transfixed to the mantle by a jack-knife, fireplace tools, umbrella stand, bowler and deerstalker hats, chemical corner, pipe tobacco stuffed into a Persian slipper, a tantalus sits atop a sideboard well stocked with various bottles of alcohol and glasses, two swords on the wall [or among the fireplace tools or in the umbrella stand], as well as a painted portrait of General Charles Gordon, etc. The initials "V R" marked in bullet holes adorn the wall. There is a divan, armchair, desk, pipe rack, and books and manuscripts everywhere. Burgundy Victorian wallpaper and wall sconces give the room a warm, intimate feeling. Two doors lead to separate bedrooms and a third door leads to stairs down to the front door. The floor is bare wood, save for one area rug in front of the divan. A large picture window looks out onto Baker Street from the second story, and there is a breakfast table with two chairs nearby. DR. JOHN WATSON enters from his bedroom with a cup of tea, sits in the armchair, and picks up a copy of *The Times* newspaper. SHERLOCK HOLMES enters from the other bedroom carrying his violin and bow, closing the door behind him. He wears an elegant robe and is every inch the dashing and brilliant detective. He puts the violin and bow in their case, then moves to the breakfast table to pour himself a cup of tea. WATSON lowers his paper.)

WATSON

Ah, there you are, Holmes! And about time too! You won't catch me sleeping half the day away. Rise and shine! That's the English way.

(Pleased with his little jibe, WATSON disappears behind his paper again.)

HOLMES

I perceive that you visited Mrs. Nesbitt's fine establishment last night, Watson.

(as the stunned WATSON lowers his paper)

In the English way, presumably.

WATSON

That's unworthy of you, Holmes. And bloody disgusting! You've been following me through the streets of London!

HOLMES

Not at all.

WATSON

You must have! Admit it!

HOLMES

Nonsense.

WATSON

Then how...I mean, not that I'm admitting anything, but--

(HOLMES takes a seat on the divan.)

HOLMES

A simple matter of elementary deduction. When you went out last night you were in a somewhat peevish frame of mind. The dusting of chalk on your left cuff indicates that you made your way to your club, where you apparently engaged your friend Thurston in a game of billiards, no doubt with the idea of relieving him of a few pounds. The vigor with which you slammed the door upon your return indicated that your plan did not go well--

WATSON

Because Thurston is a bloody cheat!

HOLMES

--and then not two minutes later I heard our door open quietly, but with no accompanying footsteps, which indicated you were carrying your shoes in your hand and did not wish to be heard going back out. The late hour severely limited the number of emporiums that you might visit, and now this morning I find you in a calm and relaxed state of mind that can't simply be explained by a good night's sleep. *Quod est demonstratum.*

WATSON

I simply needed a drink or two and some decent company to help settle my nerves. And Mrs. Nesbitt happens to be an excellent conversationalist!

HOLMES

I never doubted it for an instant.

WATSON

Yes, well, in the future I'll thank you to keep your *quod est* demonstrating to yourself.

(HOLMES' bedroom door opens and IRENE ADLER emerges in a vibrantly colored silk robe.)

IRENE

Is that tea?

HOLMES

Indeed it is, my sweet! Courtesy of the estimable Dr. Watson.

(IRENE sweeps towards HOLMES to sit next to him and sip from his cup of tea.)

IRENE

Mmm...delicious.

HOLMES

As always. Our Watson is something of a tea savant.

(IRENE drapes her leg over HOLMES', revealing a glimpse of thigh in the process.)

WATSON

Miss Adler! A little decency, please!

IRENE

Oh, for Heaven's sake! You're a doctor! Surely you've seen a woman's leg before.

WATSON

Well, of course I have! But--

HOLMES

Come now, my dear. A little decorum for the good doctor's sake. He had enough excitement last night.

IRENE

Did he?

(looking at WATSON)

Well, I hope you closed your eyes and thought of England.

(WATSON puts down his teacup with a clatter and stands up, out of sorts, and ready to lecture.)

WATSON

Right. Now listen to me, you two! I know how much you're both in love with your own cleverness, but I've been meaning to have a word--

IRENE

This can't be good.

HOLMES

It never is.

WATSON

--about the state of affairs in this household!

HOLMES

He's all wound up on tea.

IRENE

Shh. He's trying to say something.

(IRENE gets up to get her own cup of tea and a scone.)

WATSON

Thank you. Yes, I am trying to say something. Now then, I am well aware of just how stupid I am. I get daily reminders from the both of you about how mind-numbingly slow and thick I must be because I can't solve murders based on the depth to which the parsley has sunk into the butter on a hot summer day. However, despite my vast and apparently unending ignorance, may I point out that I am the only one here actually making money.

HOLMES

What? No! That can't be true!  
(to IRENE)

Is that true?

IRENE

It might be.

WATSON

I get paid fifty pounds for every story of yours I write up in *The Strand Magazine*. When was the last time you got paid for a case?

HOLMES

Well...the work is its own reward.

WATSON

No, it isn't! Money is its own reward! Pounds, sovereigns, half crowns. A bloody farthing, for God's sake! I'm the only one paying the bills!

IRENE

But as you said, it's our cases you write up. So, that's our contribution. We're the ones giving you material.

HOLMES

Excellent point, my dear!

IRENE

I thought so.

(HOLMES and IRENE clink teacups.)

WATSON

Oh really? You provide the material? Let's just go over your last few cases, shall we?

(WATSON pulls a notebook from his jacket and leafs through it as he paces back and forth.)

WATSON

Here we are...last Thursday, Mrs. Pickford of 73 Govan Lane lost her cat, Mr. Jingles. You retrieved the cat from a dustbin where it had fallen asleep. You followed up this triumph when Mr. Hainsely of 14 Broadchurch Road reported his wife missing and suspected murdered. Miss Adler found her in the alley behind her usual pub in a drunken stupor and brought her home. And just yesterday, Lady Claybourne's supposedly stolen emerald necklace was found in the pocket of her own nightgown, where she had forgotten she put it because she's getting a bit senile.

HOLMES

Ah, but we did find it! You know our methods, Watson. When you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.

WATSON

And when you eliminate any source of income, what remains is getting thrown out into the street because you can't pay the bloody rent! I can't write up any of those cases as a new adventure.

IRENE

Why not?

WATSON

Seriously? You think people want to sit down and read "The Adventure of the Sleeping Pussycat?" "The Adventure of the Not Actually Stolen Jewelry?" We need something with an edge! Something foreign, dangerous, a master criminal--

HOLMES

Like Professor Moriarty?

WATSON

Exactly! Professor Moriarty! The Napoleon of Crime! Sitting like a giant spider at the center of London's underworld, plotting and scheming the most bizarre and outlandish crimes imaginable. That's precisely what we need! Except someone in this room, and I'm not pointing fingers, someone in this room threw him off a waterfall!

IRENE

(to HOLMES)

That was you, sweetheart.

HOLMES

It seemed like a good idea at the time.

WATSON

Well, it wasn't! Moriarty gave you two a challenge! He gave you something to do, and that gave me something to write about.

(MORE)

WATSON (cont'd)

I'm not saying that psychopathic criminals don't have their downside, but they're a damned sight more interesting than sleeping pussycats!

IRENE

Well then, I have the perfect suggestion. If you want something a bit more exciting, why not a story that's a full and honest description of our relationship and the way we work?

WATSON

We've gone over this...

HOLMES

That would definitely be a page-turner.

IRENE

I only appear under my real name in "A Scandal in Bohemia"...

(goes to the desk, picks up a copy of *The Strand*, and leafs through it)

...here we are!

(reading)

"To Sherlock Holmes she is always *the* woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex...there was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler, of dubious and questionable memory." Why did you have to kill me?

WATSON

Because that's the way stories work. Sherlock Holmes is the hero, and heroes don't have lovers or wives or women of any sort in their lives.

IRENE

Why not?

WATSON

Because they get in the way of being heroic!

IRENE

What about Samson and Delilah?

WATSON

She betrayed him to the Philistines and they tore his eyes out.

IRENE

Jason and Medea?

WATSON

She gets mad at him, so she kills their children.

IRENE

Tom Jones and his beloved Sophia?



WATSON

The novel ends once they get married because he's not a hero any more! Look, it's quite simple, married men are not heroes! Not now, not ever! They're plain, dull, spineless husbands devoted to providing for their wives and children. No more adventures, no more conquests, just a steady, boring walk straight into the grave.

IRENE

And what do you mean, "of dubious and questionable memory?" Why am I dubious and questionable?

WATSON

You two only met because you were blackmailing the King of Bohemia!

IRENE

Because he was a complete and utter bastard.

WATSON

That may well be, but--

HOLMES

I'm afraid Watson's right, my dear. You are an irredeemably wicked specimen of the female species.

(IRENE turns to HOLMES, raises an eyebrow, and the palpable energy between them is electric. As HOLMES and IRENE move towards one another, WATSON steps between them.)

WATSON

All right, stop that! Just stop it! Both of you. I'll admit, I thought it was rather charming to see the two of you smitten with one another, and yes, your respective intellectual talents certainly complement one another wonderfully, but I didn't expect...

IRENE

Me to move in?

WATSON

Quite. This is, need I remind you, Victorian England. It's simply not done. So, the only way for me to explain your presence here is for you to be Mrs. Hudson, the devoted housekeeper of Sherlock Holmes.

HOLMES

(to IRENE)

Wait, I seem to recall...what was the name he gave the housekeeper in "A Scandal in Bohemia?"

IRENE

Mrs. Turner.

HOLMES

Yes, that's it! Then it was back to Mrs. Hudson again in the next story. You really must keep better track of your character names, Watson.

WATSON

Back then I was turning out a new story every two weeks! And do you know why? Because I had wonderful material! "The Adventure of the Speckled Band," "The Blue Carbuncle," "The Red-Headed League." Those were the days of the great cases! Excuse me for mixing up the name of our supposed housekeeper!

HOLMES

If I might venture a bit of literary criticism, I must say that your choice of the name "Mrs. Hudson" for Irene wasn't particularly inspired. Why not something with a bit more panache?

IRENE

That's Watson's little cipher, my dear. Hudson, six letters, starts with the letter "H." Holmes, six letters, starts with the letter--

HOLMES

Oh, I see! That's rather clever, actually.

WATSON

Thank you. I am proud of that particular authorial flourish, now that you mention it, although I'm sure most readers won't notice.

HOLMES

Well, most readers don't have Irene's peculiar sensitivity insofar as names and language are concerned. That's why you should listen to her suggestions.

WATSON

Very well. You have my full attention.

IRENE

All right, here is my idea to give the stories a bit more punch and solve the problem of the very dull, boring, and dreary Mrs. Hudson at the same time.

WATSON

I'm listening.

IRENE

Mrs. Hudson should die. Violently. She should be killed off by a pygmy or a ravenous school of piranhas. Then the beautiful and marvelously insightful Irene Adler miraculously comes back to life and moves in with Sherlock Holmes, whereupon they form a detecting team based on their mutual brilliance and lust for one another.

HOLMES

I must say, I like the sound of that.

WATSON

Do you two even read the stories I write? Sherlock Holmes is a bachelor! An emotionless calculating machine. Expert boxer, single-stick player, and swordsman--

IRENE

(stifling laughter)

Swordsman?

HOLMES

Don't laugh!

WATSON

(shouldering on)

--plays the violin passably well and smokes a pipe. Knowledge of art, philosophy, and politics--feeble. Knowledge of chemistry and sensational literature--profound. Oh, and one more tiny detail. He doesn't like women.

IRENE

Then who was that in bed with me last night?

(HOLMES holds his hand up and waves.)

WATSON

For God's sake, I can't write that you two are anything but a confirmed bachelor and his plain and dutiful housekeeper.

IRENE

Why do I have to be plain?

WATSON

What am I supposed to say? "Into the room stepped our housekeeper, Mrs. Hudson, her exquisite feminine form barely concealed by her silk robe..."

IRENE

I like that much better.

HOLMES

Hear, hear! He does have a way with words.

WATSON

You two aren't even bloody married!

IRENE

Of course we're not married! Why should we sanction and participate in a patriarchal society that systematically deprives women of their most basic rights?

WATSON

And she's off...

(WATSON goes to the tantalus and pours himself a glass of brandy.)

IRENE

We can't vote, can't own property...oh, no. We're supposed to be the Angel of the House, who quivers in excitement at the idea of a bargain at the shops or a freshly scrubbed kitchen floor, our sole focus the happiness and contentment of the man who has been gracious enough to take us in and to provide our poor, simple souls with all that we need simply by being in his presence.

WATSON

I need something stronger than tea.

(draining his glass)

It's pointless. I try to explain things, but I may as well be speaking Swahili.

HOLMES

Irene speaks Swahili. Don't you, dear?

IRENE

*Kidogo tu.*

HOLMES

You see?

WATSON

I'm going to try this one last time. We need money. I thought I could take a few quid off Thurston at billiards last night, but that didn't go very well. London is an expensive city and these rooms are not cheap. Tea, scones, tobacco, cocaine...it adds up.

HOLMES

All right, then. We'll have to give up scones.

IRENE

(taking a scone)

Speak for yourself.

HOLMES

So, what you're saying is, we need a case. The more bizarre and inexplicable, the better. Something colorful and mystifying, preferably with a dash of foreign intrigue, and behind it all a shadowy, malevolent intelligence. Something like--

WATSON

--like this fellow coming down the street.

(WATSON'S attention is riveted outside the window.)

HOLMES

I'm sorry?

WATSON

There's a man coming this way. Some sort of package under his arm, with a bloody bandage wrapped around his head.

(HOLMES and IRENE bolt to the window.)

HOLMES

So there is!

IRENE

He's carrying a traveling case and looking at house numbers, which means he's a stranger to the area.

HOLMES

Left-handed.

IRENE

Not English.

WATSON

Please be a client...

HOLMES

But northern European heritage.

IRENE

True, but most recently residing in a much warmer climate.

WATSON

Please be a client, please be a client...

HOLMES

He's slowing down and...

(There is the sound of a doorbell ringing.)

WATSON

Yes! A client! It's a client!

(to IRENE)

Well, go on! Fetch him upstairs!

(as she moves to the door)

Not like that! Put your...something more decent, please!

(IRENE heads off to the bedroom as  
WATSON pushes the window open and  
shouts down below.)

WATSON

I say! Hello there! Up here! Yes, hello! Mrs. Hudson will be down straightaway. She's coming! Don't go anywhere!

(IRENE emerges from the bedroom tying  
the sash of a plain, full-length robe.)

IRENE

(with a heavy Cockney accent)

I'll just let the bloke in then, shall I, guv?

WATSON

Please don't do that.

IRENE

Do what, gov'nor? Go down the apples and pears?

WATSON

Oh, God...

HOLMES

The stairs!

IRENE

Earn some bees and honey for the Duke of Kent?

HOLMES

Hold on, I know this one...earn some money for the rent!

(IRENE gives HOLMES a thumbs up.)

WATSON

Just go let the poor bastard in before he bleeds to death on our front porch.

(IRENE goes to the door leading downstairs. Just before she exits, she turns back to HOLMES.)

IRENE

Your friend's a bit of a Hampton Wick.

(IRENE exits, closing the door behind her.)

HOLMES

That means you're a--

WATSON

I know what it bloody well means! Why does she do that? Every time we have a visitor or client she puts on that ridiculous Cockney accent.

HOLMES

She's just having a bit of fun. And it's part of her Mrs. Hudson character.

WATSON

Speaking of which...

(shepherding and posing HOLMES in the armchair)

...sit over here...legs crossed...fingers steepled together like you're thinking about something of massive importance...where's your pipe? Pipe, pipe, pipe...

(pulling a pipe from the pipe rack)

(MORE)

WATSON (cont'd)

There we are!

(putting the pipe in HOLMES' mouth and then adjusting his robe)

Very nice! Excellent...you look like a proper consulting detective now.

HOLMES

You're too kind. Shouldn't you assume your official position?

WATSON

Yes, absolutely!

(WATSON rushes to sit on the divan and picks up *The Times*. A moment later, IRENE enters with VINCENT VAN GOGH. He wears a green overcoat and a blue hat that has black fur at the front. His shoes are worn and his pants are cuffed at the bottom. In one hand is a small traveling case and beneath his arm he carries a framed painting wrapped in canvas. Around his head is a white bandage, with a bloody stain over his left ear.)

IRENE

Right this way...

(As IRENE leads VAN GOGH into the room, HOLMES and WATSON both stand up.)

HOLMES

Ah, do come in! I am Sherlock Holmes and this is my colleague, Dr. Watson. Whom do we have the pleasure of addressing?

VAN GOGH

My name is Vincent. Van Gogh.

WATSON

(pulling out his handkerchief)

You poor fellow. Here, take my handkerchief.

(As everyone looks in confusion at WATSON...)

HOLMES

That's his name.

WATSON

What's his name?

HOLMES

(Dutch pronunciation)

Van Gogh.

WATSON

No, it isn't. He's got some phlegm in his throat...some kind of mucus. You might be coming down with something, Mr...?

VAN GOGH

Van Gogh.

WATSON

Good Lord...

HOLMES

Pray let us have your coat and hat and take a seat, Mr. Van Gogh. Mrs. Hudson, would you be so kind as to fetch our guest a cup of tea?

IRENE

A bit o' Rosy Lee? No trouble, no trouble. He's in a bit of two and eight, he is.

(WATSON takes VAN GOGH's overcoat and hat to reveal that his clothing is spattered with bright colors of paint, and paintbrushes protrude from the front pocket of his jacket. HOLMES and VAN GOGH sit down as IRENE pours tea into a cup.)

HOLMES

Yes, as Mrs. Hudson so eloquently put it, you do seem to be in something of a state, Mr. Van Gogh.

VAN GOGH

To put it mildly.

(IRENE hands him a cup of tea.)

IRENE

There we are. Get that down your billy goat and you'll be right as dodgers.

(As VAN GOGH looks around in mystification.)

WATSON

Just enjoy your tea, Mr...do you mind if I call you Vincent? Vince? Vinny, perhaps?

VAN GOGH

Anything is fine.

(VAN GOGH drains his cup of tea.)

HOLMES

Now then, how may we be of service to you?



VAN GOGH

I scarcely know where to begin.

HOLMES

You have incurred a wound, I see. Were you attacked?

VAN GOGH

No, I...the wound is self-inflicted, I fear.

HOLMES

Indeed? Dr. Watson, would you mind...?

WATSON

Of course! May I examine your wound?

(As VAN GOGH hesitates...)

IRENE

Cor, blimey, leave off, will you? The poor bloke's humiliated enough as it is! Mark my words, there's a woman at the bottom of this.

(VAN GOGH gets to his feet, clearly ill at ease.)

VAN GOGH

How could you possibly know that?

IRENE

I'm psychic. I can read your mind clear across the room, I can.

VAN GOGH

Can you really?

HOLMES

No, no. Calm yourself, Mr. Van Gogh. Mrs. Hudson will have her little jokes. She's not psychic. She's just a very good guesser. Please take your seat. Dr. Watson, your professional opinion, please.

(VAN GOGH sits back down. WATSON lifts his bandage to peer beneath it, with IRENE making sure she gets a good look too.)

WATSON

You appear to have completely severed the lower portion of your ear with an extremely sharp instrument of some kind.

VAN GOGH

Ya.

HOLMES

And you did this to yourself?

(VAN GOGH manages a nod, then drops his head into his hands as his body shakes with sobs. HOLMES and WATSON look at one another, utterly at sea.)

IRENE

If I might make a deduction, I think Dutch boy needs something a bit stronger than tea, Dr. Watson.

WATSON

What? Oh, yes, of course! What's your pleasure, Vince? Brandy? Cognac?

VAN GOGH

Have you any absinthe?

WATSON

Absinthe? No, can't say that we do. Fresh out I'm afraid.

HOLMES

Put absinthe on your shopping list, Mrs. Hudson.

IRENE

Will do! Can never have enough addictive psychoactive drugs around here, can we?

VAN GOGH

Then some brandy please.

(WATSON hustles to pour a snifter of brandy. IRENE finds a feather duster and makes a show of cleaning up a little. Occasionally, her duster actually dusts something.)

HOLMES

Now then, would you care to recount the series of events that led to your self-mutilation?

VAN GOGH

Very well. It all began with...Paul.

HOLMES

Paul?

VAN GOGH

Gauguin. I would like to say that he is a colleague, but perhaps he would deny that word. Better perhaps, to say that I am a great admirer of his. Like me, he is a painter, but Gauguin is an exceptional artist. I was speaking about him to a friend of mine, and she suggested that I invite Paul to the south of France to stay with me in the town of Arles, so that we might paint together. I thought it was a wonderful idea, and so I wrote to him about starting a small artists' colony.

(WATSON hands VAN GOGH the brandy, then sits down to take notes.)

IRENE

Excuse me interrupting, but did you mention absinthe a bit ago?  
(off VAN GOGH's nod)

My old man used to love the absinthe. The Green Fairy, he called it. Here's the thing though. Drink enough, and it drives you barking mad it does.

VAN GOGH

I am aware of absinthe's reputation and ya, I have moments when I am twisted with joy or madness or prophecy, like a Greek oracle. In such a state, I confess that I am sometimes seized by the most uncontrollable urges.

HOLMES

As the bandage around your head would indicate. Do go on with your story. You and Mr. Gauguin took up residence together.

VAN GOGH

Ya. And at first, things were going well between us. We were both working during the day and frequenting the cafés at night. But at length, certain tensions began to grow.

WATSON

Would those tensions be due to the woman Mrs. Hudson mentioned?

VAN GOGH

Ya. Ultimately, we had words...harsh words. Our final argument spilled out into the street. Paul said that he loved her more than me and that he would paint for her the greatest painting of his life and that she would never look at me again.

(he gets to his feet, reliving  
the moment)

I didn't know what to do. I was in a rage of fear and anguish. He is the better painter...more handsome...more refined in his manners. But he does not love as I do! He does not know what I know--that there is nothing more purely artistic than to love! So when I reached into my pocket and felt a razor, I knew in an instant that I could give her a gift surpassing anything he could compose on a canvas. I would give her a piece of myself...

(VAN GOGH lifts his left hand to where the lobe of his left ear would have been. With an imaginary razor in his right hand, he slices through his ear, back to front, with HOLMES watching closely.)

HOLMES

A striking tale, Mr. Van Gogh. May I see your wound?

VAN GOGH

But Dr. Watson has already--

HOLMES

Please.

VAN GOGH

If you must.

(HOLMES picks up a magnifying glass, lifts the bandage, looks beneath it, then replaces it. He examines the paint spatters on VAN GOGH's jacket and looks him up and down.)

HOLMES

Fascinating.

WATSON

What is it, Holmes? I saw nothing remarkable.

HOLMES

No? Then you saw but failed to observe. Yours is a very unique and compelling story, Mr. Van Gogh...and I don't doubt the whole experience was devastating for you.

VAN GOGH

Ya. And the most devastating thing of all is what has brought me here. You are the only man in Europe who can help me, Mr. Holmes, which is why I spent my very last franc to make the journey to London.

WATSON

I'm sorry, what was that? You spent what?

VAN GOGH

My last franc to make the trip here.

WATSON

You mean to say that you have no money?

VAN GOGH

No. I am a poor artist, Dr. Watson.

WATSON

But you can raise some, surely? How much do your paintings typically sell for?

VAN GOGH

I regret to say that I have yet to sell a single painting.

(One awkward beat later...)

IRENE

Well, not to worry. The art business is a tough nut to crack, eh? You sell one or two pieces and they'll be flying off the shelves like hotcakes, they will. You just need to get yourself a reputable dealer, luv.

VAN GOGH

Actually, my younger brother Theo is an art dealer.

IRENE

Oh. Well, obviously in some dirty little backwater city, eh?

VAN GOGH

Paris. I send him paintings, but he cannot sell them. It's mystifying that no one, not a single person has bought any of my work. It is only through Theo's generosity that I can continue to paint. He sends me money and supplies.

WATSON

Well, thank you for stopping by with your most interesting story, but I'm afraid this is a professional consulting agency. We charge all of our clients a fixed fee--

HOLMES

--except when we remit the fee altogether--

WATSON

--which we're not doing anymore!

VAN GOGH

But I have brought you payment! I brought you a piece of my work!

(VAN GOGH retrieves the wrapped painting he brought.)

HOLMES

Well, that's very gracious of you, Mr. Van Gogh. Very thoughtful.

WATSON

Holmes...

HOLMES

Now, now, let's just have a look, shall we? The fellow's traveled all this way with half an ear, after all.

(VAN GOGH removes the canvas wrapping to reveal "Starry Night Over the Rhone.")

VAN GOGH

I call it, "Starry Night Over the Rhone." I painted it a few months ago while standing on the banks of the Rhone River...it is only a minute or two walk from my house in Arles.

WATSON

How much absinthe were you drinking?

VAN GOGH

I'm sorry?

IRENE

(deeply moved by the painting,  
and in her normal voice)

You'll have to excuse Dr. Watson, he's a medical man. It's all facts and science to him. He doesn't have the soul of an artist, which you, Mr. Van Gogh, most definitely do.

VAN GOGH

Why thank you. What happened to your accent?

IRENE

Oh, it's not really an accent as such. It's more of a sinus infection than anything. Now describe to us what we're seeing.

VAN GOGH

Very well.

(closing his eyes as he sees  
the painting in his mind)

The sky is aquamarine. The water is royal blue, the ground is mauve, and the town is blue and purple. The gas is yellow and the reflections are russet gold descending down to green-bronze. On the aquamarine field of the sky the Great Bear is a sparkling green and pink. Two colorful figurines of lovers are in the foreground.

HOLMES

And may we presume that you are one of the lovers depicted, Mr. Van Gogh?

VAN GOGH

(opening his eyes)

I can see that I have come to the right man. You must help me, Mr. Holmes.

(IRENE takes the painting from VAN GOGH  
to look at it more closely, almost in  
tears at its beauty.)

HOLMES

I'm still unclear in what manner I may be of assistance.

VAN GOGH

It has to do with my ear. Or rather, the missing part.

HOLMES

Go on.

VAN GOGH

The woman in the painting...I hope you will believe me when I tell you that she fancied me, even though--

IRENE

She's a whore.

VAN GOGH

The French have a more pleasant expression...*une fille de joie*.

IRENE

And I'm sure that makes it much more pleasant for the women.

WATSON

You'll have to excuse Mrs. Hudson. She's a bit of a--

IRENE

Sentient human being sickened at the exploitation of women for the pleasure of men? Is that what you were about to say?

VAN GOGH

Please don't imagine that I am proud of my actions. Ya, I keep the company of whores, but what choice do I have? I am not an attractive man, a wealthy man, a famous man. I have a great fire in my soul, but no one ever comes to warm themselves at it...and the passersby see only a wisp of smoke in the distance. But Rachel...that is her name...she likes my paintings. I have spent my life looking for a different light, a brighter sky, and that is what I found in Rachel. It was she who told me to invite Paul to Arles. I have given her most of my work, because she is the one person who has seen past my ugliness...and I would even venture to say that she loved me...

HOLMES

Until the arrival of Paul Gauguin.

(VAN GOGH staggers slightly, grabbing a piece of furniture for support. HOLMES and WATSON rush to help him.)

HOLMES

Are you all right?

VAN GOGH

I'm very tired. I have not slept these past three days.

(There is the sound of the doorbell ringing.)

HOLMES

Who the devil can that be?

(WATSON rushes to the window, looks down, then turns back to HOLMES.)

WATSON

It's another client! A woman!

HOLMES

Well, we can't see her just now--

WATSON

A very fashionable woman!

HOLMES

Watson, you surprise me. We don't discriminate between clients based on their fashion sense.

WATSON

What I mean is...she's exceedingly well-dressed.

(WATSON rubs his fingers together in the universal sign for "money.")

HOLMES

Oh...that kind of fashionable.

(HOLMES turns to IRENE for guidance as she puts the painting on the desk.)

IRENE

Mr. Van Gogh is in no state to continue his story. He needs to rest.

WATSON

Absolutely! Thank you, Mrs. Hudson!

(IRENE takes VAN GOGH's hat, overcoat and traveling case, then guides VAN GOGH to HOLMES' bedroom.)

IRENE

This way, Mr. Van Gogh.

(IRENE disappears into the bedroom with VAN GOGH.)

WATSON

Holmes, if I might have a quick word about Mr. Van...

HOLMES

...Gogh.

WATSON

(a quick glance around)

He's a Dutchman, and I don't trust the Dutch.

HOLMES

Why in heaven's name not?

WATSON

Their cheese, of course.

HOLMES

You fascinate me, Watson. Do go on.

WATSON

Think about it. Gouda. Edam. What's the difference, eh? I'll tell you what the difference is. There isn't any! It's all a lie!

(MORE)



WATSON (cont'd)

A complete fabrication. Same cheese wrapped in different colors of wax! Scheming bastards...

(The doorbell rings again.)

HOLMES

The door, Watson. After all, I need to assume my official pose.

WATSON

(heading for the door)

Fine. But mark my words, our new painting friend is a filthy, lying Dutchman!

(WATSON exits. HOLMES moves to look at VAN GOGH's painting, gazing at it thoughtfully.)

WATSON (O.S.)

...my sincerest apologies for the delay in getting to the door, but you just come up, state your case to Mr. Holmes, and everything is going to be just fine.

(WATSON enters with MARIE CHARTIER. She is dressed entirely in black, wears a hat and veil, gloves, and carries a small purse. HOLMES turns to her.)

WATSON

She was on the verge of leaving, but I convinced her to see you.

MARIE

I should not have come.

HOLMES

Now, now, it isn't always easy to know what to do in difficult circumstances. Please, do come in.

(WATSON and MARIE come further into the room. HOLMES takes her left hand.)

HOLMES

You've met my colleague, Dr. Watson. I am Sherlock Holmes. And you are?

MARIE

Marie Chartier.

HOLMES

Well, Miss Chartier, as Dr. Watson indicated, you're among friends here. You have no cause for alarm.

MARIE

How do you know I am not married?

HOLMES

I detect no wedding ring beneath your glove. Am I incorrect?

(off MARIE's shake of her head)

You appear to be in some degree of distress. May we offer you a drink to settle your nerves?

(off MARIE's shake of her head)

Then please, take a seat.

(MARIE sits down on the divan, hands clasped and head bowed. HOLMES and WATSON sit down as well, with WATSON pulling out his notebook and pencil.)

HOLMES

You are in mourning, Miss Chartier. Is there some connection between the death of a loved one and your visit here?

(off her nod)

Then if you'll forgive my asking, who is it that has passed away?

MARIE

My father.

HOLMES

Ah. I'm very sorry to hear of your loss.

WATSON

Quite. A terrible thing losing a parent. Our deepest condolences.

HOLMES

How was it that he came to pass on?

MARIE

He was murdered.

WATSON

Murdered? Are you certain?

(MARIE nods.)

HOLMES

And have you contacted the police?

(off her shake of her head)

Why not?

(MARIE falls back on the divan with a moan.)

WATSON

Holmes, she's unwell!

MARIE

If I might have a glass of sherry.

WATSON

Of course!

(WATSON leaps to his feet to pour a glass of sherry. HOLMES takes MARIE's hand to offer some comfort.)

HOLMES

I must confess myself slightly confused, Miss Chartier. You say your father was murdered, but the police are not involved?

MARIE

No.

HOLMES

Well, I will admit they do have their shortcomings, but Scotland Yard has several fine detectives. And if they find themselves struggling with a case, it's then that they come to me.

MARIE

Scotland Yard is of no use to me. My father was not murdered in this country.

(WATSON presents MARIE with her sherry. She removes her hat and veil to reveal a stunningly beautiful face. She sips her sherry, then becomes aware that WATSON is gaping at her.)

MARIE

Is something the matter, Dr. Watson?

WATSON

No! No, no, no, no. Just wondering...wondering if you're enjoying that sherry!

MARIE

It is most pleasant, thank you.

(IRENE slips back into the room from the bedroom, unseen by HOLMES and WATSON. She has changed into a simple, yet very becoming outfit. MARIE notices her and seems a bit unnerved.)

HOLMES

If I might return to the case, where was your father murdered?

(MARIE stands up abruptly.)

MARIE

I should not have come. I am wasting your time. There is nothing you can do and I am intruding--

WATSON

Not at all!

MARIE

Are you certain? If you could spare me a few moments of your time, I can pay whatever you ask.

HOLMES

There's no need to discuss any fees at present--

(MARIE reaches into her purse and removes a roll of pound notes, tied with a ribbon. She holds them out.)

MARIE

Perhaps one thousand pounds as a retainer? Would that do?

WATSON

Good Lord...

MARIE

(setting the money down)

But I know how much you value the strange and fantastic in your work. Perhaps this case would not be attractive to you.

WATSON

It's attractive! Very, very attractive.

MARIE

Or perhaps you would not wish to travel to another country to investigate--

WATSON

Nonsense! Holmes and I adore traveling! We love the wind at our backs and a bit of dust in our throats, don't we, Holmes?

HOLMES

Yes, of course...

IRENE

(stepping further into the room, using her normal voice)

Will you be wanting the chicken or the smoked salmon for lunch today, Mr. Holmes?

HOLMES

Oh, Mrs. Hudson! I didn't see you there.

WATSON

We're actually in the middle of a case. This is Mademoiselle Marie Chartier. Miss Chartier, our housekeeper, Mrs. Hudson.

(IRENE and MARIE nod at one another, but the temperature in the room has gone up several degrees. MARIE and IRENE begin to circle one another like tomcats in heat.)

IRENE

Ça va?

MARIE

Ça va. Parlez-vous français?

IRENE

Un petit peu.

WATSON

Miss Chartier has suffered a personal tragedy and has come to us for counsel and help.

HOLMES

Her father was murdered abroad.

IRENE

Indeed? In Europe, I would wager.

WATSON

Well, we don't know where, exactly--

MARIE

No, Mrs. Hudson is correct.

WATSON

Ah, I see. The French accent, yes? So, it was France, then?

IRENE

No. And not in one of the large countries. But not one of the very small countries either. Somewhere in between. Let's see...what's a nice-sized European country where they speak French? Switzerland, perhaps?

(MARIE reacts in surprise.)

HOLMES

I see from your reaction Miss Chartier, that Mrs. Hudson has scored a palpable hit.

IRENE

I'm just a good guesser.

MARIE

I can see that.

IRENE

And I'll tell you something else, Miss Chartier. Knowing Mr. Holmes' interest in the singular and unexpected, I assure you that he will be most interested in your case.

HOLMES

I will?

IRENE

You will. Because it's not every day that you meet a woman whose father died in such spectacular fashion; specifically, plummeting to his death from the top of a waterfall...the Reichenbach waterfall, to be precise.

WATSON

The Reichenbach Falls? Why, that's where Holmes threw Professor Moriarty to his death!

(MARIE pulls a single-shot derringer from her purse.)

MARIE

Yes. That is exactly what he did.

WATSON

You're...good Lord! You're Professor Moriarty's daughter? Holmes, did we know Moriarty had a daughter?

HOLMES

We do now.

MARIE

(to IRENE)

I am most impressed. What gave me away?

IRENE

Your name, of course. Moriarty is merely the Anglicized form of the Gaelic name Ó Muirheartaigh, which means "navigator" or "sea worthy." "Muir" means the sea, much like the French "mer." "Cheartaigh" means correct or worthy. The French version of the name becomes obvious...Marie Chartier.

HOLMES

Bravo! Outstanding, my dear! You've outdone yourself.

IRENE

Not really. I'm afraid that you and Dr. Watson allowed yourself to be distracted by a pretty face.

WATSON

What? No! Nonsense! Not at all!

MARIE

(turning the gun on WATSON)

You do not think that I am beautiful?

WATSON

I didn't say that! Women with guns are always quite striking. Wouldn't you say so, Holmes?

HOLMES

Quite.

(turning to MARIE)

(MORE)

HOLMES (cont'd)

And unlike the pure and chaste Dr. Watson, I will confess that the aesthetically pleasing qualities of your appearance did momentarily cloud my deductive faculties. Fortunately, we have Mrs. Hudson on hand for such eventualities.

MARIE

Indeed. What a pity that my gun holds only one bullet, but that is all I need.

(MARIE raises the gun and fires at HOLMES, but misses as he dives out of the way.)

MARIE

*Merde!*

(MARIE throws the gun to the ground and grabs a sword. She whirls on HOLMES.)

WATSON

Stop this! Think of what you're doing!

MARIE

I know exactly what I am doing.

(she closes in on HOLMES, then  
pauses)

My name is Marie Chartier. You killed my father. Prepare to die.

(HOLMES scrambles to put some furniture between himself and MARIE, perhaps throwing a pillow or two at her.)

HOLMES

Miss Chartier, may I be so bold as to point out that I have no weapon. Surely you wouldn't strike down an unarmed opponent?

MARIE

And why not?

WATSON

It's not very sporting.

MARIE

Being "sporting" is for men. When women want to kill, they kill.

IRENE

That's true. Women are treacherous...

MARIE

...and deceitful...

IRENE

...and as a wise man once said, "Not to be trusted, not the best of them."

HOLMES

That was me! I said that!

MARIE

Then we understand one another perfectly.

IRENE

Perfectly. So you'll understand this.

(IRENE reaches down and yanks on the rug MARIE is standing on. MARIE tumbles onto the divan, giving HOLMES a chance to grab a sword of his own. MARIE gets to her feet and they face one another. HOLMES holds his sword in his left hand. They begin fencing, and it quickly becomes clear that MARIE is the far superior fencer. She laughs as HOLMES scrambles for cover.)

MARIE

You call yourself an expert swordsman?

HOLMES

No, I don't!

MARIE

It says you are in *A Study in Scarlet*!

HOLMES

That was someone else's clever idea!

WATSON

Just a bit of literary license.

HOLMES

Literary license which is about to get me skewered!

(HOLMES is now literally running away, pursued by MARIE.)

WATSON

For God's sake, Holmes! Stop running away! She's only a woman!

(The action freezes. HOLMES looks at WATSON in mystification as IRENE and MARIE shoot death stares at him.)

WATSON

Sorry...very sorry. Do carry on.



(The action continues at furious pace. With HOLMES in dire straits, he manages to get a piece of furniture between himself and MARIE. Panting from exertion, he still manages a smile.)

HOLMES

Well, I must say, this has been most invigorating.

MARIE

Why are you smiling?

HOLMES

Because I know something you don't know.

MARIE

Ah...very clever, Mr. Holmes. You are not left-handed.

HOLMES

No, sadly, I am left-handed. However, I am not the fencer in the family.

(HOLMES tosses his sword to IRENE, who catches it. MARIE laughs.)

MARIE

Seriously? Your housekeeper?

(With deliberate calm, IRENE removes her top, revealing a bustier beneath. Seeing this, MARIE does the same and also removes her skirt.)

WATSON

Great Heavens above...

(IRENE and MARIE face one another. IRENE pick up the hem of her dress, then taps her sword on the floor.)

IRENE

*En garde*, bitch.

(MARIE smiles and flourishes her sword in an elegant, intimidating manner. The ensuing fencing duel is the equal of anything conjured up by Errol Flynn or Douglas Fairbanks in their heyday. HOLMES and WATSON scramble out of the way as MARIE and IRENE lunge, thrust, and parry over every inch of the room. At a pause in the action, with both MARIE and IRENE panting heavily...)

MARIE  
Who are you?

IRENE  
I'm just the housekeeper.

(The fencing commences again, until IRENE disarms MARIE, ripping the sword out of her hands.)

MARIE  
Most impressive. I do not suppose you will do the sporting thing and let me retrieve my sword?

IRENE  
I don't think so.

MARIE  
Then what? You plan on calling the police?

IRENE  
No. I plan on killing you.

(As IRENE moves in for the kill, MARIE grabs "Starry Night on the Rhone" and uses it as a shield.)

MARIE  
You would not destroy a valuable work of art, would you?

WATSON  
Valuable? It's not worth a bloody thing!

HOLMES  
But it has been offered as payment. Surely we must respect that.

IRENE  
I'll only put one hole in it. Promise.

HOLMES  
Well...

IRENE  
A very small hole.

HOLMES  
How small?

IRENE  
You won't even notice it. And we've got Van Gogh in the bedroom. He can patch it up, no problem.

HOLMES

No. I may not know much about art, but my grandmother was the sister of Vernet, the French artist. Art must be respected, regardless of its monetary value. Watson, guard the door, please.

(WATSON moves to the door leading to the stairs as HOLMES turns to MARIE.)

HOLMES

And I'm afraid this concludes our pleasant *tête-à-tête*, Miss Chartier. If there's nothing more, I will contact my friend Inspector Lestrade to conduct you to Scotland Yard on a charge of attempted murder.

MARIE

You need not bother. And on second thought, I do not think I will retain your services as a consulting detective.

(MARIE picks up the one thousand pounds and waves it tauntingly.)

HOLMES

I'm afraid you're misjudging your predicament, Miss Chartier.

MARIE

And I am afraid your deductive faculties have failed you, Mr. Holmes.

HOLMES

How so? Mrs. Hudson has you covered with her sword and Dr. Watson is guarding the door. Your situation is impossible.

(off MARIE's smile)

Why are you smiling?

MARIE

Because you are forgetting your own rule of deduction. When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.

HOLMES

I'm afraid I don't understand.

MARIE

Then allow me to demonstrate. Mr. Holmes, Dr. Watson, Mrs. Hudson, if indeed that is your name. This has been an intellectual treat, but I must now bid you a *fond adieu*.

(Taking the painting and money with her, MARIE runs for the open window and jumps out with a yell, disappearing in an instant.)

WATSON

Good Lord!

(As WATSON rushes to the window, there is the sound of a horse neighing and a cart speeding away down the cobblestone street. HOLMES joins WATSON at the window.)

WATSON

Well, there's a bit of bloody luck! There was a hay cart right below this window, Holmes! She landed right in it! Otherwise she'd be in pieces on the cobblestones!

HOLMES

Sometimes, my dear Watson, luck is the residue of design.

(WATSON turns away from the window, absolutely delighted.)

WATSON

Professor Moriarty's daughter! And she's just as brilliant and evil as he was. Not to mention, she's the most beautiful woman I have ever seen in my life! This is wonderful!

IRENE

Wonderful? She just tried to kill Holmes!

WATSON

But she didn't! If she had, of course, that would have been a terrible tragedy. But she didn't and it's a wonderful story!

(WATSON pulls his notebook and pencil from his jacket)

Now then, how might she best be described? Perhaps..."When she lifted her dark veil, every lineament in her features spoke of a possessed creature bent on bloody revenge"...no, that's a bit much, maybe..."Pulling the gun from her purse, she gazed on Holmes with coal black eyes devoid of any human emotion..." Yes, much better!

HOLMES

So you think she came here to kill me?

WATSON

I'm sorry?

HOLMES

Was that the purpose of her visit? My assassination?

WATSON

Holmes, she fired a gun at you.

HOLMES

But missed...from extremely close range.

IRENE

What are you thinking, darling?

HOLMES

I'm thinking motivation. What is her motivation to murder me?

IRENE

You threw her father off a waterfall?

HOLMES

Which a true psychopath wouldn't care about one way or the other. As our eloquent friend Watson just described her, she's "devoid of any human emotion."

WATSON

But she came here with a loaded gun in her purse! Surely that suggests murderous intent.

HOLMES

She's the daughter of Professor Moriarty. That means she will have enemies everywhere. Given that, I suspect she carries a gun with her on a permanent basis. And why the veil?

WATSON

You're Sherlock Holmes! She must have feared that you would recognize some family resemblance to the Professor in her features.

HOLMES

But she willingly revealed herself when you handed her the glass of sherry.

IRENE

Maybe she only wanted to be anonymous on her way here. That way there would be no witnesses to confirm her visit.

WATSON

There we are! Mystery solved!

HOLMES

I wonder...

IRENE

Wonder what?

HOLMES

If I told you, you would fancy that I had become as deranged as our new houseguest...what if she came here to steal our Van Gogh?

WATSON

Then she's bloody welcome to it!

IRENE

I'm not sure I follow.

HOLMES

I'm not sure I do either, but there's something about the whole episode that doesn't ring true.

(MORE)

HOLMES (cont'd)

Her arrival, her appearance, her actions...we're missing something. Of course, it's a capital mistake to theorize without data...

WATSON

There is no data! She took the painting, and the thousand pounds, I might add. All we have is an empty gun and a bullet hole in the wall.

HOLMES

There's more to this than meets the eye, and I suspect that our friend Mr. Van Gogh is involved. However, our knowledge of the modern art world is woefully inadequate to the task at hand.

IRENE

Then clearly, research is required. I know most of the major art dealers in London. Perhaps I'll pay them a visit.

(IRENE picks up the scattered clothing and exits to the bedroom.)

WATSON

And as it happens, I recently became acquainted with the most cultured man in London.

HOLMES

You?

WATSON

Don't scoff! Met him at dinner last month. An American publisher wants us both to write stories for his magazine.

HOLMES

Excellent! Well, see if you can pick his brains a little regarding the world of painting here and on the Continent.

WATSON

And what will your contribution be? Baby-sitting Mr. Van...?

HOLMES

Precisely. Someone has to stay here in case he awakes. And it will give me time to mull over the facts of the case.

(IRENE rushes back in, still getting dressed to go out.)

IRENE

Just have tea ready when we get back.

WATSON

And tidy the place up.

HOLMES

Anything else? Either of you need some socks mended, washing done?

IRENE

I think that about covers it.

WATSON

(offering his arm to IRENE)

Shall we, Miss Adler?

IRENE

(taking WATSON's arm)

We shall, Dr. Watson.

(Arm in arm, WATSON and IRENE exit.  
HOLMES heads to the sideboard and opens a  
drawer just as the door opens and IRENE  
and WATSON reenter.)

IRENE

And stay away from the cocaine!

HOLMES

(closing the drawer)

I wasn't!

WATSON

He was.

IRENE

Definitely.

HOLMES

I was just looking for my tobacco.

IRENE

Then perhaps you might find it where you always keep it--

WATSON

--in the toe of the Persian slipper.

HOLMES

Oh yes, of course! My mind's on the case...  
(as IRENE and WATSON stare)

It is!

(WATSON takes a leather case from the  
drawer, and heads back towards the  
door.)

HOLMES

You're being ridiculous! Both of you! I do have some self-control,  
you know.

IRENE

Not much. Which is why we love you.

WATSON

And get dressed, for God's sake. It's the middle of the day. Stop lounging around in your pajamas.

IRENE

We'll be back. Get your pipe. Sit down. Start thinking.

(WATSON and IRENE exit. HOLMES tosses some pillows to the floor, then gets a matchbox, his pipe, and the Persian slipper. Just as he is about to sit down, VAN GOGH emerges from the bedroom. He sings the Dutch folk tune "Galathea, siet den dach comt aen" as he moves towards the portrait of General Gordon hanging on the wall.)

VAN GOGH

(singing)

*Galathea, siet den dach comt aen*  
Galathea, see the day begins  
No, my love, await and linger  
It is the starlight  
No, my love, await and linger  
It is the moon.

(VAN GOGH removes the painting, nods at HOLMES, then disappears back into the bedroom, closing the door. HOLMES sits down, loads his pipe with tobacco from the Persian slipper, and removes a match from the matchbox.)

HOLMES

Definitely a three-pipe problem.

(HOLMES strikes the match to light his pipe. The scene is now a perfect picture postcard from a Sidney Paget drawing of Sherlock Holmes in *The Strand Magazine*. HOLMES blows the match out and we BLACKOUT.)

END OF ACT ONE.