




THE
WATSONIAN



THE JOURNAL OF THE JOHN H WATSON SOCIETY

SPRING 2024 • VOLUME 12, NUMBER 1

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Ms Little,

I write to compliment you on the latest issue of *The Watsonian*, Vol 11, Number 11, Fall 2023. I found all articles of interest, with just one exception.

The item by Shai Porter purports to be in imitation of Nicholas Meyer's *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution*. Regrettably it perpetuates the anachronisms and other errors in that gentleman's book. The whole matter was carefully dissected by Trevor Hall in 1977. His chapter "Sherlock Holmes and Sigmund Freud: a study in forgery" in *Sherlock Holmes and His Creator* (New York, St Martin's Press, 1977, pages 16-29) is indispensable, as is the whole book, and scholars must pay heed if further forgeries are to be detected. I fear that Shai Porter has fallen prey to yet another perpetrator.

Canonically yours,
Michael Duke, JHWS "Phillip"

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

“But there are always some lunatics about. It would be a dull world without them.” /aff¹

— SHERLOCK HOLMES, “THE
ADVENTURE OF THE THREE GABLES”

Another addition to the hundreds of Sherlock Holmes interpretations emerged from its nest this spring after barely making it onto our collective radar for the publication of the 2023 Fall/Winter *Watsonian*. And, given the endless Sherlockian regenerations, you may ask, why does yet another one matter? And the answer is... it doesn't. Not really.

To deliberately misquote a popular television series,² “into every generation, a Holmes is born.” We had our Jeremy Brett, our Robert Downey Jr., our *Elementary* and the BBC revival. We've had adaptations some of us wished had had greater staying power though they were destined to fade into obscurity and some we wished the door could have hit a little harder on the way out. But now, we are

experiencing what I can safely say is a new generational shift, and some of you better get to swimming or you'll sink like a stone, because this is the dawning of the age of *Sherlock & Co.*

But what is this adaptation, exactly? You will hear that it is a podcast.

This is a lie.

Sherlock & Co. is, at its heart, an audio drama (like *Jackie the Ripper* or *The Offensive*—other ‘podcasts’ by the same brilliant and award-winning author, Joel Emery). A podcast is generally some dude and/or dudes sitting behind a desk with a big ol’ microphone talking about whatever passion they might have. *Sherlock & Co.* has John Watson running around modern-day London with his Zoom H4n, talking about his passion: this guy he’s sharing rooms with named Sherlock Holmes. As a drama about a podcast rather than a podcast itself, John is frequently at home in Baker Street watching football, or playing laser tag in an amusement park (spoiler: he’s an excellent shot). It concerns their lives and relationship as much as any case, which, for me at least, is the key to a good adaptation.

Sherlock & Co. is an ambitious project, designed to encompass all the short stories and novels, a feat last accomplished by yet another audio drama... the BBC’s Sherlock Holmes series by Bert Coules. There are some definite similarities: the writing is outstanding, the actors stellar and the script knows when to stray from the original just enough to add elements of interest without losing the heart of the source material.

Yes, yes, it’s a “modern” update. As if Rathbone and Bruce weren’t modern. As if Watson himself didn’t write for a contemporary audience back in the 1880s and on. And it’s episodic, to really deliver on the feel of a serial magazine, where fans are waiting for the next edition to

come around, careful not to ruin it for those who haven't read/heard the latest from Dr Watson quite yet.

So, think audio drama. Radio plays. Think... Petrie wines, my old friends. Except John's 'show' is a far more of a low-budget affair. He'd love to have Guinness as a sponsor, but instead he has... well, I think it's some type of dog biscuit.

You've probably heard bits and pieces of it by now. Perhaps seen some fanart— which the show's creators support to an unheard of degree. (And if you haven't, you will within the pages of this issue.) John has a dog. Sherlock has a host of mental health issues. Victor Trevor has... OK, I'm not gonna go spoil everything for you. You need to try it for yourself. Besides, that's not really what I'm here to talk about anyway. I'm here to talk about the fans.

Sherlock & Co fans tend to be younger, and perhaps are a bit more ...energetic... in their style. But pop into their online spaces, and you will find a true range of ages, nationalities and lifestyles, with one thing in common: an obsession with Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. And not only the podcast versions of the characters, I'd like to state rather emphatically. And what are they doing on this server, where conversations sometimes seem to fly by at the speed of light, especially when John Watson makes one of his regular appearances? They are keeping Holmes and Watson green, that's what! They are Playing the Game as well as any Old School Sherlockian (all forums are in-universe, except a few well-marked areas). They are fans of a Real Podcast, hosted by John Watson and marketed by their own version of the Literary Agent, Joel Emery and Goalhanger, Inc. In this subscription-based Discord space, these busy bees are creating and sharing a plethora of creative content, often live. They are watching *Sherlock Gnomes*, and "the one with the dinosaurs", and *Great Mouse*

Detective, and... the BBC series, which many have never seen before.

That's right. Many of these fans were too young when the BBC's blockbuster came out, or were hesitant to engage fully in so intense a fandom online. The vast majority of Discord are under 25, with a significant portion under 20. Under 18, even. Still, if you pop into the Other Adaptations section, much like the Diogenes Club, where one can speak freely out of the constraints of the *Sherlock & Co* universe, and you'll find a 17-year-old eagerly discussing the merits of Arthur Wontner's Holmes with 53-year-old me.

Many of these young folks have never felt excluded from Fandom Elders simply because they've never been in fandom spaces before. And this community welcomes everyone with open arms. Mama John encourages a supportive environment. He leads by example, praising the art and stories his fans create. Talented artists speak freely on how the fandom supports their efforts, including the man himself. You always knew Watson was a good one, yeah?

While it may be discriminatory to frame this in terms of age-based advice, this is a fast-paced server, and when Watson himself pops online to chat with "his kids" it moves even faster. There are slower moving areas, but, not many, and you need to be able to speak the language of youth culture enough to know that when someone brings up Neil Gaiman's "A Study in Emerald," someone else is likely to post an *Arthur* meme asking a Cat Neil Gaiman what he is doing in her falafel or to know a skull in response to a comment means someone died from laughter. So. If that sort of thing throws you off balance, maybe sit back and watch for a bit before jumping right in. Or... ask for some help. They want you there. They won't tell you to go do

your taxes, I promise. (Although this issue will hit around tax time in the US, so... I'll be the one to give you a gentle reminder.)

Now, back to my friend who sent me a link to Wontner Holmes. He is 18 and his bio says he has 86.56% of the canon annotated (a popular pastime for these younger scholars). Spending just a few minutes with him will convince you that Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson are timeless.

I asked members of the Discord to tell us what they thought of their welcoming corner of fandom, and here are some of the things they told me said late on a Wednesday night, (though given the international reach of this server, it could have easily been early Thursday afternoon for them) as a certain editor struggled to finish their journal contribution on time:

“I love the motivations and how nice everyone is. The greatest examples are the art commissions. Everyone who does it shares with others. When they share the art, everyone always says how cool or amazing they look and never gets hurt when they don't make it [The final cut. John/Joel has chosen to use fanart in his promotional material] congratulates the winner.”

“I'm fandom young, and this server was basically my introduction to the H&W community! The kind and lovely people here have explained the story abbreviations to me [Jay Finley Christ], recommended reading orders, and shared Holmes history! The people in here are so eager to help each other out, and it's a really nice vibe to have!”

“I also learned bunch a new stuff about the canon books and I find it easier to just ask here if I have a question than to Google stuff because some of my questions are, for example, too random or too specific. Also, for some reason Google just loves showing mostly BBC *Sherlock*-related stuff, so finding stuff and discussions about the canon online is— eh.”

“I would say the S&Co fandom is what was the last push for me to actually start reading.

Upon joining the server, I was struck by the age range of the fandom, and the fact that there were people who were willing to help with homework, everyone is always so supportive. I only got into Holmes and Watson media about four years ago, so I just love the energy of everyone here <3 [a heart]”

“I learned so much more being in this fandom than being in the BBC fandom. I feel like no-one there really cared about the canon that much or about the Sherlockian fandom as a whole. Or at least not the people I knew and met online. But now, being in this one, it's so different. For example, I read a whole article thing about the ‘Baker Street Irregulars’ like, 2 days ago, and I was so blown away because I had no idea that it's an irl [in real life] thing!”

“This is also my first time in Sherlock fandom, cause I grew up hearing how toxic the BBC Fandom was, so I tried to stay away from it. I stayed away from the fandom until Sh&Co. In the beginning, I did feel like not a ‘real’ fan cause I didn't read the canon but that was quickly dismissed.”

“I’m, like, blown away by how big the Sherlockian fandom is. And how there’s a whole history to it. I’ve never been in a fandom like that. The only fandom I’ve been in that was ‘old’ I would say was Marvel. But still, I was never into the comics... just the movies, and they were a new thing. So for me, all this is so crazy (in a good way).”

“I consider myself young fandom. I watched BBC a LONG time ago and the RDJ version, a little of *Elementary*, so I was familiar, to say the least. Out of those Sh&Co. was the only one that has gotten me to really want to read the canon book. The amount of knowledge that I didn’t know about the original work was more than I could realize. The best thing in here is everyone doesn’t judge for not reading the canon or act all smug about it either. They get excited for you that you even joined and they are willing to answer anything about Sherlock-related stuff.”

You can access *Sherlock & Co.* for free on any platform that plays podcasts (Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts) as it is supported by advertisers, but much of the fun is in the special features added at the subscription level. You can help John pay the rent, and in return you get newsletters, Q&A sessions, product discounts, early access to episodes, specialised recordings from John (and likely Sherlock) ...all depending on the membership level.

Be brave. Go forth. Enjoy.

— Sandra Little
JHWS, “Evidently Harmless”

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

1. /aff is an example of a tone-tag, which you are likely to see in Discord. They are used to clarify that a written statement is meant to have a certain delivery/subtext. In this case, it means 'affectionately'.
2. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003)

A FOGGY DAY IN LONDON TOWN



ALEXIAN GREGORY, JHWS “DARWIN”,
ASH, BSI

Every Sherlockian is a Londonophile. Therefore, each of our mental landscapes boasts a mural of 1895-ish London. I will posit that the three key components of these mental pictures are hansom cabs, gaslights, and fog. This essay will examine London fogs.

According to our ever-trusty Goodrich, London fog is mentioned in the Canon a total of 12 times in 9 stories. Fog is water mist hanging in the air, but London fog was not that— or better yet, was even more than that. It was water mist permeated by the particulate effluvium of coal smoke, belching out of London chimneys.

Coal was the fuel of choice for heating homes and businesses. Thus, London fog was actually London smog. Consider this excerpt from BRUC: “...a dense yellow fog settled down upon London... we saw the greasy heavy brown swirl still drifting past us and condensing in oily drops upon the window-panes...” A *yellow* fog? That isn’t just a water mist fog! A *brown* swirl and *oily* drops? That’s not water mist! That is pollution.

That the fog was dense is incontestable. There are

numerous reports of fog-bound folks literally unable to see their hands in front of their faces as they walked the streets. In the opacity of the fog, crime had a field day. Criminals could snatch purses and pocket watches and disappear into the fog in a second. Pursuit of them was fruitless.

Two demographics, however, flourished in the fog.

“Linklighters” were self-employed males (mostly youths) who carried flaming torches. For a few pence they would light the way to your door. Then there were the blind men. They needed no torches to guide their way to your destination for the consideration of a few copper coins.

I’d always wondered why fog was called a pea souper, when pea soup is green. One explanation is that pea soup is thick, as is fog, but it turns out that there *was* a type of pea soup which was, indeed, yellow. It was made of old, dried (yellow) split peas. This cheaper version of pea soup was consumed by poor people.

Being indoors did not necessarily provide refuge from the noxious fog. There were incidents when fog permeated theaters and the play had to be cancelled because the audience could not even see the stage.

Parliament grappled with the fog question for many decades— with no results. Big business successfully lobbied and maneuvered to stop any legislation which involved additional expense for themselves, but karma was on the prowl. A few times, the acrid fog actually penetrated the halls of Parliament. After hurrying through debates, MPs, sneezing and coughing, fled the sacred precinct of the Mother of Parliaments for relief.

Coughing or sneezing into a handkerchief produced black mucus onto the cloth. This was the pulverized coal soot pumped into the London air from coal-burning

fireplaces through chimneys. Even short walks through the fog had bad results. One's clothes became coated with the coal soot and needed immediate laundering. In addition, personal bathing was surely indicated.

Despite the inconveniences and problems generated by the polluted fog, some managed to find humor in it. Consider this take on a foggy London by Bob Hope: "I'm sorry I was late getting here, I was lost in the fog... I wanted to whistle for a cab, but I couldn't find my mouth. I wondered if anybody would find me out there and rescue me. Suddenly I saw a light in the distance. Slowly it became clearer and clearer and finally I could make it out... It was the end of my cigarette."

Regarding our Holmes, the fog made him verbally moody, as this passage from *SIGN* shows us. "See how the yellow fog swirls down the street and drifts across the dun-colored houses. What could be more hopelessly prosaic and material?"

Astonishingly, the Victorian-originated fog was not eliminated until passage of the Clean Air Act of 1956. Fog had plagued London for about 125 years. The London fog outlived Victoria, Edward VII, George V, George VI and lasted until the early regnal years of Elizabeth II. It is now relegated to literary fiction and grandmotherly tales.

This essay was derived from London Fog by Christine L. Corton. This highly recommended book covers the topic very well.



David Burke as John Watson. Art by Helloliriels.

221B ENTERPRISE



CYNTHIA CANNON POINDEXTER

Consider a steadfast friendship of two men who are quite different from each other. Ponder the characteristics of these two friends that allow them to maintain respect, affection, and loyalty— despite their differences. One of these men is seen as scientific and logical...the other is seen as mostly intuitive and impulsive. They have a strong work partnership, and even though they don't entirely understand each other's quirks, each would do anything to protect the other. Although each of these men is accomplished and smart on his own, as a duo they are much greater and far better than they are alone. They have amazing adventures together— adventures that we know about because one of the men records them. What famous partnership am I describing?

Of course, it is Captain Kirk and Mr Spock.



But perhaps you were thinking of another pair? Dr Watson and Mr Holmes? Whichever twosome you were imagining, there are strong similarities. I offer here a beginning comparison to prime the pump. (Note that I reference only the original Doyle canon and the original Star Trek series and movies.)



Some thoughts about Spock and Holmes:

- They both feel emotions but strive to suppress them. Spock struggles to repress emotion for two reasons: his mother was an Earthling and the Vulcans on his father’s side had to overcome an “aggressive, colonizing period: savage, even by Earth standards.” (Spock in “Balance of Terror”) As Watson explains regarding Holmes, “Grit in a sensitive instrument, or a crack in one of his own high-power lenses, would not be

more disturbing than a strong emotion in a nature such as his.” (SCAN)

- They both rely on science, deduction, rationality, and logic in their work. As Holmes says, “Data! Data! I can't make bricks without clay.” (COPP) Spock often says there is “insufficient data” or “I need more data.”
- Both were accused by colleagues earlier in their careers of being machines without feeling; later, coworkers grew to respect, accept, and take pride in them.
- Both go without rest or sleep when deeply involved in problem-solving, as Spock says about himself in “The Paradise Syndrome”. Watson says, *“Sherlock Holmes was a man, however, who, when he had an unsolved problem upon his mind, would go for days, and even for a week, without rest, turning it over, rearranging his facts, looking at it from every point of view until he had either fathomed it or convinced himself that his data were insufficient.”* (TWIS)
- Both play a stringed musical instrument: Spock a Vulcan lute and Holmes a Stradivarius violin.
- Both think with their fingertips together.

And then there’s Kirk and Watson:

- They are the recorders of the adventures the majority of the time, whether through the Captain’s Log or through articles in the *Strand*.
- Both tend to show more emotion easily and often, and have a sense of humor.
- Both are impulsive and tend to behave more erratically.

- Both have military skills.
- They both have experience of women which extends over continents or galaxies.

Furthermore, Kirk and Watson tend to use handheld weapons (phasers or a service revolver) while Spock and Holmes are skilled in unusual, up-close, hand-based self-defense methods. For Spock, it is the Vulcan nerve pinch; for Holmes, it is boxing, single-stick, or Baritsu.

Regardless of the method or technology, both members of both duos are constantly protecting, rescuing, or backing up each other. Clearly, both pairs are best friends who are on adventures together; their friendships might seem unlikely, but are long-lasting and deep. In “City on the Edge of Forever”, during an accidental time travel incident to the 1930s, social worker Edith Keeler says, “You two don’t seem to belong here,” and Spock asks, “Where do we belong?” She answers Spock with, “You belong at his side.” In “Amok Time”, Kirk disobeys Starfleet orders to take care of Spock, saying, “He’s my friend.” A prime example of the Watson/Holmes friendship occurs when Watson is shot:

“Then my friend's wiry arms were round me, and he was leading me to a chair. ‘You're not hurt, Watson? For God's sake, say that you are not hurt!’ It was worth a wound—it was worth many wounds—to know the depth of loyalty and love which lay behind that cold mask. The clear, hard eyes were dimmed for a moment, and the firm lips were shaking. For the one and only time I caught a glimpse of a great heart as well as of a great brain. All my years of humble but single-minded service culminated in that moment of revelation.” (3GAR)

One amazing parallel is that both Kirk and Watson suffered the death of their best friend, and then the friend was resurrected in a later work. In the movie *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, Spock sacrifices himself for the good of the many, just as Holmes dies ridding the world of Professor Moriarty. (FINA)

Kirk and Watson are left to deliver eulogies for their friends, using words like “most” and “best”. As the crew gather to discharge Spock’s body into space in the second movie, Captain Kirk chokes back tears as he says, “Of my friend, I can only say this: of all the souls I have encountered in my travels, his was the most... human.” Watson writes of Holmes, after his disappearance at Reichenbach Falls: “the best and the wisest man whom I have ever known” (FINA).

At the time of their respective demises, there were no plans (by Nicholas Meyer or Conan Doyle) to bring the character back to life (Doyle, 1891; Nimoy, 1995). Loopholes develop in both cases. Because Spock’s body was launched onto a planet that was creating life, his body gets accidentally regenerated in the third movie (*Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*). Because Holmes’ body is not seen by Watson or anyone else, he can have a surprise comeback, throwing Watson into a faint. (EMPT)

Finally, a mystery exists regarding whether Holmes was an ancestor of Spock’s human mother (is there indeed art in the blood?). This debate arises from the movie “*Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*”, in which Spock says,

“An ancestor of mine maintained that if you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the solution.”

Of course, this is an axiom of Holmes', as he reports,

“That process, said I, starts upon the supposition that when you have eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.” (BLAN)

Perhaps the partnership of Watson and Holmes has served as a template for many subsequent duos. Can the Star Trek collegial friendship be seen as an adaptation of the John Watson/Sherlock Holmes stories? Regardless of whether these partnerships are actually related, Kirk and Spock seem to carry on the Watson/Holmes tradition of maintaining a strong friendship and having great adventures together, and they will live in our affections and memories... where it is always stardate 1895.2.

THIS ARTICLE STEMS from a presentation to The Noble and Most Singular Order of the Blue Carbuncle in Portland, Oregon. I thank this scion for their enthusiastic encouragement.

SOURCES

- Doyle, A.C. (November, 1891). Letter to his mother: “I think of slaying Holmes...and winding him up for good and all. He takes my mind from better things.”
- Nimoy, L. (1995). “I am Spock.” NY: Hyperion.

THE PITFALLS OF A JOHN WATSON-ESQUE CHARACTER



IN DEFENSE OF TOTOMARU ISSHIKI

ELY WOLF

(This article may contain spoilers.)

Totomaru “Toto” Isshiki from the series *Ron Kamonohashi Kindan No Suiri* (Ron Kamonohashi’s Forbidden Deductions) is frustratingly disregarded by fandom— a fate many other John Watson-coded characters share. Created in October 2020 by celebrated mangaka Akira Amano— writer of cult favourite “Katekyo Hitman Reborn,” and character designer for “Psycho Pass” and the upcoming “Suicide Squad Isekai”— the manga series is set in Japan. The 13-volume series is on its 123rd chapter (and still running), garnering new fans from all over the world.

RON AND TOTO = RONTOTO

Set opposite the titular character of Ron Kamonohashi— a sixth-generation descendant of Sherlock Holmes— Toto Isshiki has taken on the role of designated partner and eventual friend. Unlike Dr Watson, Toto is an officer

working for the investigation division of the Japanese Metropolitan Police. Together, the two have a moniker that their manga readers and Japanese voice actors have coined for them: *RonToto*.

An anime adaptation¹, courtesy of Diomédea, was released with a total of 13 episodes that aired from October until last Christmas. Although the first season is over, Johnny-come-latelies can still stream it. The first volume of DVD/Blu-ray (four episodes and some extras) is already out in Japan and a second season is in the works.

I've read some negative comments on Crunchyroll and seen the lack of enthusiasm on social media sites like Tumblr when it comes to Toto-centered gifs or analyses. This is not a gripe, but an observation. I can't help it. I am a Watsonian in my heart, and I will defend any John Watson-esque characters— such as Toto Isshiki. It is the same pitfall that befalls any adaptation or iteration that portrays Holmes and Watson lookalikes.

People disregard the significance of a Watson-esque character and elevate any versions of Holmes. Of course this is understandable on the surface. Holmes characters are flashy, eccentric, distant, and aloof geniuses. The Watson ones are ordinary, insignificant. He's one of us—the audience.

Ron Kamonohashi is a disheveled, slender man in his early 20s who is a very talented detective. A monomaniac for sleuthing, he has long fringes that cover his Sinatra-blue eyes. When he deduces who the culprit is, he pushes his bangs to the side and reveals them. It is a gesture that charms and fascinates the readers and viewers. But it is Toto's determination that finally breaks Ron's five-year *hikikomori*² lifestyle (a form of severe social withdrawal in Japan where adolescents and young adults become recluses in their parents' homes, unable to work or go to school for

months or years). Ron had withdrawn from the society after suffering a traumatic experience, dubbed the “Bloody Training Incident”, at the BLUE Academy school for detectives in England. If not for Toto’s encouragement and promise to support Ron, the former shut-in wouldn’t have returned to sleuthing. The pair made a pact and formed an unlikely partnership. Ron would help Toto with his lacklustre career by allowing him to pose as the one who did the deductions. This way, even though the academy had revoked his detective license, Ron could still solve cases with Toto— like his ancestor, Sherlock Holmes.

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER...

Although the anime is adapted faithfully from the manga, it has issues concerning its portrayal of Toto’s actions when it comes to a pivotal scene regarding the culprits. Once Toto tells his deduction (using Ron’s directives), Ron’s compulsion to drive the suspects to commit suicide kicks in. It is an involuntary, almost hypnotic “disorder” that is not without reason when one reads the manga in its entirety.

In order to make the scenes more suspenseful, the animators have chosen to prolong Toto’s thought process. The time frames between anime (film) and manga (printed material) differ. The anime-only viewing public’s verdict: Toto is stupid because he is so slow to react.

If viewers do accuse Toto of this inefficiency, then they should also have the same opinion of other characters who just stand there and wait. Viewers don't seem to extend this negative appraisal to anyone else. It doesn’t help that both the manga’s and anime’s summaries describe Toto as a “pure-hearted but dim police detective.”

SOME OTHER ADAPTATIONS

As far as I know, Granada Holmes respectfully adapted Watson not as a bumbling idiot, but as a man of medicine capable of being Holmes's effective partner. Others, such as "Elementary" and the earlier seasons of "Sherlock" did their part to make Watson an intelligent professional who could stand on their own.

In an analysis of the anime adaptation, however, Ron's attitude is miles away from the many iterations of Sherlock Holmes, for he treats Toto as an equal with different capabilities since the latter has not only seen him at his lowest but also is the only one who had succeeded in encouraging Ron to make a comeback.

Ron also considers the way Toto gauges people. During a strange meeting with Spitz Feier, the BLUE instructor expresses a fervent wish that Ron might lend a helping hand to search for his older brother. Toto assessed that the instructor was not at all insidious, but rather was kind-hearted. Before accepting Spitz's "case", Ron seeks out Toto's opinion. In short, Toto is his moral compass. Ron now knows that he's in good hands with the police officer. One way or another, Toto is able to stop the suspects from putting themselves into danger. Ron also appreciates Toto's empathy and feels humbled every time Toto admires his deductive talents, which certainly feeds his ego. In the manga, the two may have accumulated other friends, but they know that there really is only the two of them together.

In conclusion, Jami-Leigh C. Bartschi states in their thesis³ "My Dear Watson: A Musical Interpretation of Sherlock Holmes's Friendship with Dr. John Watson", "It is Watson's regular function to register bafflement in the face of mystery and to express wonder as Holmes solves it.

Perhaps it should be emphasized, however, that though Watson is a foil he is not a burlesque character, as the radio and motion picture dramatizations have portrayed him. His bewilderment is intended not so much to reveal him as the butt as to add luster to Holmes and his deductions. If Watson does play Sancho to Holmes's Quixote, the joke, when there is one, is as likely to be directed toward the eccentric knight of the nineteenth century rationalism as made at the expense of his faithful squire. We may patronize him somewhat, but we also take our cue from him on how to react."

That is Totomaru "Toto" Isshiki in a nutshell.

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1. <https://kamonohashiron.com/>
 2. <https://www.tumblr.com/a-forbidden-detective/705647071157436416/hikikomori-and-ron-kamonohashi>
 3. <https://scholarship.rollins.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=mls>

“I’M JUST JOHN”



A FILK THE TUNE OF “I’M JUST KEN” FROM
THE BARBIE MOVIE

KAREN ELLERY, JHWS “SHERRY”

Doesn’t seem to matter what I see,
“You don’t observe” says he.
A conductor of the light, only.
I have certain theories of my own;
They’ll remain unknown.
All these years, I write his down,
Those deductions of renown.

‘Cause I’m just John: always the one he
 leans upon.
It is my fate to cater to the great detective
 and my work to give.
I’m just John.
Where I’m in the dark, he sees the dawn.
What will it take for me to see the great
 heart as well as the mind so free?

I want to know what it’s like to see, to solve
 the mystery.

Who done the crime? I’d choose the clues
and read their history.
Is my solution finally here or valedictory?
Whisper “Norbury.”

I could run a Johnathon!
Feels like sun, this Johnathon.
Number one, this Johnathon.
Sherlock’s done. It’s Johnathon!

I’m just John. Anyone else would soon
be gone
Because he’d show his vast ego and lack of
tact and they’d leave hastily.
I’m just John,
But as his friend I soldier on.
What will it take for him to value pawky
humour and my loyalty?

I’m just John (and I’m enough)
And I’m great at doctor stuff!
So hey, Holmes, I’m here. Yeah I’m just
John!
My name’s John (or sometimes James--
My wife TOTALLY knows my name!)
So hey, check my books out, yeah I’m just
John.
Sherlock, I’m just John.



*John Watson is Proud Mom to a few hundred children on the Podcast
Discord Server. Art by Zoom Koski.*

“ADORKABLE” IS A NEOLOGISM



THE CHARMINGLY AWKWARD SIDE OF JOHN WATSON

DEE LAUNDRY, JHWS “BAILEY”

A criticism laid against many 20th century screen versions of John Watson is that he was portrayed, in the words of Olivia Rutigliano, “as a blithering idiot.”¹ She further notes that the trend has stopped in the 21st century: “from Jude Law’s age-appropriate Watson in the Guy Ritchie films, to Lucy Liu’s capable professional in ‘Elementary’, to Martin Freeman’s adrenaline-junkie BFF in the BBC Sherlock series, the Watsons doctored up by recent adaptations have restored the character’s common-sense and scientific expertise.”

And then there was a podcast.

In *Sherlock & Co.*, John H. Watson is a medical doctor, a veteran with PTSD, and a fledgling podcaster who drops his mic, forgets to stop recording, and pops off with silly phrases and jokes that don’t make anyone else laugh.

Is this a return to the mischaracterization of yore? I say no, because it is entirely in-line with another modern-day Watson adaptation: James E. Wilson of the show *House, M.D.* Wilson is a boy wonder oncologist who never gives any less than his best and is very caring with patients. He is

also a spouter of odd trivia, such as when the military man in *The Village People* wore a sailor’s uniform (“when they sang, ‘In The Navy’; the rest of the time he’s just in generic fatigues”) and what culottes are (“pants that hang like a skirt”), and a man whose victory dance is decidedly uncool.²

In both cases, Watson/Wilson is less intelligent than Holmes/House, because *everyone* is, and because exercising intelligence is not his primary motivation as a human being. Watson and Wilson are in the personality type that Keirsey calls “Guardian Protector” and DISC calls “Steadiness” – they are, above all else, conscientious and agreeable. As Professor Presbury says in “The Creeping Man” episode of *Sherlock & Co.*, those of Watson/Wilson’s personality type,

“put people first. You put community first. You know and understand the value of teamwork. You respect hierarchies, but you don’t analyse your position within it.”

This is a marvelous type of person to have as a family member, teammate, or friend, but it’s a hell-a-boring character type to watch or listen to in fiction. What’s a writer to do? For a pilot, if you’re the writers of “House”, you rely on Robert Sean Leonard’s boyish good looks and ability to deliver a quip... and you have him stammer and flush when he’s caught out on a lie made for the good of the patient. If you’re creating the podcast *Sherlock & Co.*, you have John leave in his stumbles, his mistakes in recording, and his nerves-driven faux pas. Because it’s funny, because it’s cute, because it makes Watson/Wilson more relatable and interesting.

In the case of James Wilson, his dorkiness grows over

the seasons because he begins to relax. His best friend House enjoys the fruits of Wilson’s people-pleasing tendencies for sure, but more than anything he wants Wilson to be himself, and very slowly, throughout the show’s eight seasons, Wilson begins to discover who that is.

In the case of *Sherlock & Co.’s* John Watson, I hope the dorkiness continues at about the same level, and that the nervousness that causes some of his fumbles diminishes, but the support of Mariana, who genuinely cares, and of Sherlock, who genuinely doesn’t care (in the sense that John’s awkwardness doesn’t affect Sherlock’s opinion of him) allows him to feel free to be himself.

John Watson the bumbling fool is dead; long live John Watson the cute dork.

-
1. “Redemption for Doctor Watson,” <https://crimereads.com/redemption-for-doctor-watson/>
 2. <https://youtu.be/jtvslNVRuFU?si=VSN4t0CEPOGsMdZR>

AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL
WAGGOTT



ACTOR, JOHN WATSON, SHERLOCK & CO.

SANDRA LITTLE, JHWS “EVIDENTLY
HARMLESS”

Having an interview with someone literally half-a-world away is... tricky. I would gladly have gotten up at 3 am simply for the privilege of speaking directly with someone who happens to have John Watson’s voice, but admittedly that would backfire since my sleep-addled brain would probably be on a constant loop that went something like: “I am talking to John Watson! I am talking to John Watson!”

I suppose it was ultimately best for everyone involved that we decided to conduct this interview via email.

Rather than reorganise this into distinct question-and-answer-style chunks, I have decided to keep the original formatting— a series of questions followed by a series of answers. I think the flow demonstrates just how enjoyable an experience interviewing Paul Waggott truly was.



HI THERE, Paul! Pleasure to chat with you in whatever format is best.

We can try some other method if that works better for you (Zoom, text, whatever...), but I know we are in different timezones (I'm in Colorado, US) and you doubtless have a busy schedule. So, let me know what works for you.

For the both of you: [*This is in reference to Joel Emery, who provided contact information*] the ability to have something so close to the original Sherlock Holmes fandom experience is remarkable: contemporary fiction presented as fact, in real time, episodic, and... with the occasional rushed-for-deadline mistake. I thank everyone involved for that.

To start, I did the basic google, having really only been introduced to your work via *Sherlock & Co.* because... well, I am a Sherlock Holmes nerd and my interests tend toward obsession in that direction. But I did see you are a newlywed, courtesy of the "Now to Love" article, so... congratulations! (And I'm now catching up on *Jackie the Ripper* as well.)

I think there's a certain back-and-forth aspect to interviews, so perhaps I'll chunk this in a few emails, if that feels organic? And that also gives me some time to crowdsourcing a few questions.

- Sandra



KIA ORA, Sandra!

Thanks for the wedding wishes; it was a magical day.

I'm more than happy to do a few emails back and forth so we can get a bit of the organic sense of the interview, hopefully!

Sorry it's taken me a couple of days to get back to you here, been a bit frantic this week. But got some more time

ahead now, so please send over some questions and I'll get onto answering them!

Thanks a million,
Paul



KIA ORA, Paul! Thank you so much!

I did ask a few friends at *The Watsonian* what they would ask you if they were in my place, and I found we were more or less on the same page, so...

PART ONE

1. How did you inform your portrayal of John Watson? Did you start with the original Doyle works, and were you already somewhat familiar with them? (Aside from that obligatory read of *Hound of the Baskervilles* that happens somewhere around what we Americans would call late elementary school?) Or did you lean more toward contemporary renditions in determining how to perform this role? I think there's a sort of slide in portrayals, where one informs the next, and you start to shift away from the original personality of the characters. Usually, this makes Watson progressively stupider and Holmes progressively more of an asshole, but your adaptation has managed to avoid that...
2. Even though it's fairly early in the show's production, you have already become a Favourite Watson for many. I think he comes across as intelligent and also...nice. Just...a

- nice, regular guy. I definitely see some of that affability in what I have listened to so far with Lead Investigator Freddie Abberline in *Jackie the Ripper*. Would you say that's...core you? I mean, clearly you are a nice person or else you wouldn't be looking at and responding to what are probably late-night emails from me, but... are you more private and guarded about yourself out there in the real world— as Paul?
3. Had you first worked with Joel Emery in *Jackie*? I know Marta Da Silva was also in that production. Have you worked with other cast members previously?
 4. What's it like to have found your way into a *fandom*? Is this in any way different from other types of roles? Part of being in a modern fandom is the ability to have more direct means of interaction on Twitter... errr... X... errr... (Thank you for voicing that accurate awkwardness, btw). Do you respond to the social media accounts as John, or does someone else perform that task? Will you be doing any live voicework as John on Discord?
 5. And can you tell me a bit about the acting/recording process? Are you all able to record at the same time and react to each other, or do you each record separately from home and it is mixed together?

I'll wait for a reply on this before moving forward, because I have some specific questions based on how the creation process actually works as well as fandom interactions. Please take your time.

- Sandra



Hi SANDRA!

Okay, finally had some time to mull over these questions and here we go!

I guess my portrayal of Watson is, and isn't, influenced by other adaptations. I have of course seen the BBC Sherlock with Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman, and I also remember the Robert Downey Jr and Jude Law films. I've seen snippets of "Elementary", and various other adaptations through the years. But in terms of my process, I didn't really seek to emulate or take inspiration from any of them directly.

I suppose the most likely similarities fall into the BBC Sherlock camp, but that's more a result of my admiration for Martin Freeman rather than anything direct. When I was first starting out my performing career, I was hugely influenced by the work of Simon Pegg and Martin Freeman. I was a massive fan of "Shaun of the Dead" (and indeed the rest of the cornetto trilogy) and Martin Freeman's work as such a loveable everyman from "The Office" through "Hitchhiker's Guide" and beyond. As I began to learn about myself as a comedy performer, I took a lot of lessons from their work, and I'm more than happy to admit that plenty of that remains in my craft to this day!

I guess in terms of the affable nature of our Watson, a great deal of credit has to go to Joel Emery and Adam Jarrell. Joel is very conscious in the writing to make sure John has agency and isn't just a buffoonish foil to Sherlock's genius, which I think is doubly important given the framework of the show and John's nature as our P.O.V. for much of the time. So I think we've all really dovetailed well in the writing and editing and in the performance, too. We're all singing from the same hymn sheet which is

crucially important given the way in which we are recording.

As to whether I'm more private and guarded in the real world, I'd say I am a fair bit more private than might be anticipated. Well, maybe private is the wrong word - I'm definitely introverted and appreciate space. But then it's one of my favourite things to see fans of our work engaging with it and commenting and tweeting (I refuse to "X" in my own life - it shall always be Twitter to me!). It's a beautiful thing knowing that people are enjoying what we do. And with *Sherlock & Co.*, it has been even more amazing to see all the incredible fan art that people are producing. Some people are just so bloody talented!

I'd worked with both Joel and Adam previously on *Jackie the Ripper*, yes, alongside my wonderfully talented wife, Acushla-Tara Kupe. But I'd first worked with the pair of them on a podcast called *The Offensive*, which also starred the brilliant Helena Doughty. It was a mockumentary football podcast set in the boardroom of a fictional English Premier League football club, and it ran for five seasons and 150 plus episodes. It gave me my first sort of exposure to fandom, as we had lots of people interacting with us on Twitter, but I also really built a strong working relationship with Joel and Adam. For the first two seasons of *The Offensive*, I was living in London and we recorded in-person a lot, which was brilliant. However, during the pandemic, I returned to New Zealand with my now-wife and we've been here ever since. So, we recorded the final three seasons of *The Offensive* and all of *Jackie the Ripper* remotely.

Which, I guess, leads us neatly into the question about recording processes. I'm still in Aotearoa, New Zealand, while everyone else is not. So, all of Watson is recorded in my lovely, often far-too-warm, wardrobe in a small

apartment in Auckland. I know Adam and Harry have recorded in person a couple of times, and many of the other performers, too—but I haven't seen Adam or Joel in person since 2020 (Which honestly breaks my heart— I love those guys!).

So, yeah, the Watson and Sherlock parts are recorded separately, almost as far away as it's physically possible to be on Earth, and then tied together in the editing process. It's a testament to the clarity of Joel's writing, the sharpness of Adam's direction, and the talent of Harry Atwell that it comes together as well as it does. Believe me, I'd love to record with them in person, and never say never, but it seems unlikely to happen in the immediate future.

Speaking for my own process, I'll record the lines a couple of different ways, with varying intent or intensity, and try to make sure that I've covered the bases for the editing. I'm pleased to say that ordinarily there aren't too many pick-ups to do, and I think for me that comes down to my familiarity with Joel and Adam's work and having a fair inkling of what it is they're likely to be looking for.

Alright, hopefully that's enough to get the ball rolling— please let me know if you want anything expanded on here, and let me know what else this sparks for you question wise!

Thanks a million, and have a wonderful night (or day, whenever you read this!)

Paul



PART TWO

If it's one of your favourite things to see fans engaging with your work, we shall not disappoint you!

I will say I am so amazed and, well, honoured, that you have chosen to make this such a truly interactive project. When I heard about the Discord being provided with the production's blessing, I will confess I had my doubts it wouldn't be regretted for being much more intense than anyone had bargained for. The extent to which you embrace your fans is remarkable, and we love you for it. We're out there carefully not breaking the 4th Wall, adding 'onk' onto our names, and generally having a blast with some post-modern, surreal interactions and all y'all are rolling with it, joining in, and calling it normal. Was that you over in the Discord voice chat? I wasn't there at the time, because I was out doing Noble Underpaid Educational Work.

1. Are you doing the in-character tweet responses as @docjwatsonmd as well? If not, whoever is fulfilling that role is certainly endearing themselves to fans. And those shoutouts are coveted. I got one and instantly felt as if I existed in the Pod Universe.
2. You've said you've seen fan art (and perhaps have read some works as well?) Do you seek them out, or are you more inclined to avoid doing so? Does it feel like you are seeing some extension of yourself in that art, or is there more of a disconnect? Fandom code says to not present fanfic and art to the creators (in fact the BBC Sherlock fandom was specifically burned by some interviewers who showed fan art and read works to embarrassed actors), but this particular community has, by and large, tossed that rule aside and is actively tagging the @docjwatsonmd Twitter. Much like Watson, I

might edit this bit out later, but... So far, it has been innocent. You still good with it when it's... less so... or does it begin to feel uncomfortable?
(I want to clarify, I meant in knowing such things exist. I'm not meaning to imply anyone would tag you on anything truly graphic, though perhaps you might stumble upon something more romantic or risqué, and does it feel like it invades your own autonomy? (It's an awkwardly-phrased question on an awkward topic.))

3. That you record separately (in your wardrobe!) is a testament to everyone's skill and sense of unified purpose. My own acting experience is limited to stagework, never voicework, but given the whole “Acting is reacting” thing, I can only imagine the degree of connection you must need to feel it without being in a shared space! Is it more tiring to not have the ability to feed off the energy of the rest of the cast directly? Do you have cast moments together after a recording— particularly of meaningful or difficult scenes?
4. Do you do any specific warmups before recording? Do you modify your voice in any way to become John Watson? How long is a recording session and what is the schedule like, especially now that Patreon subscribers can listen to all three (or two) episodes in a row?
5. Do you know the wider arc of your character in advance, or are you as surprised as your listeners to learn new things as they show up in the script? Do you have any input on character development? Has anything surprised you, or have you ever gone back to Joel and gently questioned some aspect of the script?

6. Do you have a story you are most looking forward to recording? I will say mine is coming up in a few days (I am a huge fan of ACD's Victor Trevor and cannot wait to see how he is interpreted.)



HELLO AGAIN!

And once again, I write starting with apologies for my snail-like pace in responding. Sorry!

So, here we go with the next round of answers!

First off, hurrah for Noble Underpaid Educational Work! I continually hope that at some point we value the work of educators more honestly.

Regarding the Discord, and the chat there, that's not me, but Joel himself. He's running the Twitter account and posting as John, somehow finding time to do all that atop the busy schedule of everything else *Sherlock & Co.* related. I've said it before and I'll say it again many times, Joel is a wizard of some sort. And I agree that the interactivity is something to be cherished. It's a joyful side effect of the scale of podcasts that such connection is possible. I love that we're able to give the shoutouts to people in a way that brings them into the world of the show. I mean, the show is nothing without its audience, we do what we do to share something with others. At least that's always been my drive in acting— I want to share something with audiences whether that's an important message about life or providing an opportunity to laugh in an increasingly challenging world, the sharing is a vital part of the work for me.

Regarding the fanart, most of what I've seen has come to me through Joel, who'll share it in our WhatsApp group,

so it's already gone through a filtering process of sorts. In fact, since the last email I have temporarily (or maybe permanently, who knows?) uninstalled Twitter from my phone. I still have the account, but I'm no longer using it at the moment. I just found it was a net negative in my life, distracting and catastrophising and hyperbolic. Maybe I'll be back at some point, but for now I'm off Twitter, so the chances of me stumbling across something are dramatically reduced.

The separate records are certainly tough. There's a lot of imagining going on as I try to think what Harry is likely to do with Sherlock's lines, and what Joel and Adam are likely to want. I mean, would I prefer to record in the same room as Harry, Adam, and Joel? Without a shadow of a doubt. But the tyranny of distance makes that impossible. On top of that New Zealand is 11 to 13 hours ahead of the U.K. depending on the time of year, so even remote recording together is a remarkably challenging endeavour. A lot of credit has to go to Joel and Adam for their remarkable work editing the performances together. That we sound like we're in the same place is a testament to the performances and the edit working together.

Watson's voice is very close to my own. I'd say he's pitched slightly higher than I tend to be, but otherwise we sound very similar. I've had an interesting journey with my accent: for context, I was born in the North-East of England with a Geordie father and an Irish mother, I grew up in the South of England and then moved to New Zealand at the age of 13. It's left me with something of a non-specific accent, and indeed I've now been back in New Zealand almost 4 years and can again notice my Englishness softening. So mostly for John, it's a case of making sure I don't let the NZ in! In terms of warmups, I will hum across scales and pitches while setting up the microphone,

and then I'm usually good to go. If there's a specific moment in the script with lots of shouting or lots of emotion, I'll give myself a little bit more time to warm the voice up before those scenes, but mostly John's voice is close enough to mine that I can just happily record without too much warm-up.

I don't really know the overall arc of the character ahead of time. Joel tells me what he thinks is useful for me to know, and thus far he has been bang on the money.

To be perfectly honest with you, I wouldn't say I have a favourite story I'm looking forward to the most. I'm very much a newcomer to the world of Sherlock Holmes, but I am always excited to read the scripts and see how Joel has brought the story into the modern world. I do hope you enjoyed (perhaps the wrong word there) our Victor Trevor. I'm very excited for people to hear the stories we've got recorded and ready to go, and I look forward to going back and reading all of the original stories once the show is concluded!

Thanks for these questions; it's lovely to respond to thoughtful provocations!

Hope you're having a wonderful weekend,
Paul



I HAVEN'T FORMULATED my next few questions yet (which will be the last round, and thank you so much for this opportunity!), but I just wanted to say I loved "Gloria Scott". Loved every second of it. Loved what we learned about Sherlock and John. Loved this Victor (we have never really had a Victor in all the years of Holmes adaptations, and tbh, part of why I think we never had one is no one was brave enough to give us the Victor that your

production gave us). So, yes, "enjoyed" actually is the right word. Been waiting for a long time.

Quick question my friend gave me, which I will throw here fast, and it is this:

"Also I had a thought with the mailbag episodes, right: either Joel is **INSANELY** talented at writing naturalistic dialogue and Paul and Adam are **INSANEEEE** at getting John's lines sounding perfect **OR** Paul reads the questions and improvises them as John... but that wouldn't make sense, but I can't **FATHOM** how he would read a **SCRIPT** and sound that fucking real!"

Now, I have no problem believing you are all that talented, but I *will* ask if you have ever improvised anything as John. (Though given the isolation you record in, I'd find that nearly impossible.) Or perhaps changed a line from the original?



QUICK ANSWER to the quick question: the Q&As are like the other episodes, all written by Joel! He does amazing work at writing naturalistic dialogue and I tend to add in the little repeats or stumbles or noises that make John sound as real as I can. Because we're very seldom clean and correct when we talk in real life!

I have improvised or edited little lines here and there, maybe changing the phrasing or offering up a wee extra joke that I find funny. I'll record those with the lines as written and then leave it up to Joel and Adam to decide if my offer makes the cut for the episode. Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't, and that's great fun for me to listen out for!



AN EXAMPLE?

(This is making my quick question considerably less quick. Sorry about that. But I am just so very curious what you added that Joel said, ‘Yep. I like that bit.’)



AN EXAMPLE

Hard to remember them, but recently when Mariana suggested we should have a fruit bowl in the office for clients, and John replies, imagining offering an apple to a grieving client. The script simply said "Apple?" And I added the "Cox's Pippin?" because A) It's a funny sounding variety of apple, and B) It's my mother's favourite apple (understandably—it's delicious) and she misses them now that we live in New Zealand and almost never get them!

So, that's one little example from recent episodes, and they're mostly in that sort of realm— maybe I'll offer a different word purely because it's a funnier sound or something pings in my brain that would be cute. But they're never big changes because Joel writes so well already! There is no need to gild the lily!



FINAL ROUND

I think what marks teaching as an art as well as a science, and what puts it in the same ballpark as acting and musicianship, is how terribly underpaid/undervalued it all

is. And AI is coming on strong to take the jobs involving the creative process away. Ones which define the human experience. But hey, enough of the doom of Twitter and the world at large. We can still celebrate what we have, and I hope it brightens your day a bit to know you are part of that joy! Thanks for chatting back and forth with me.

As the editor of *The Watsonian*, I help run a serious scholarly journal (although I make a specific effort to bring in more fun and more diverse and younger voices). As a member of the Podcast Server Community, I join in on the irreverent fun and un-tampered, youthful curiosity. The remaining questions I threw over to the Discord Server to give them a chance to ask what is most important to them.

1. Did you cringe at all delivering the “tasty” line in ‘Solitary Cyclist’?
2. Have you read any fanfiction, especially “Murphy’s Law”, and if so what were your thoughts? Would you consider reading it aloud to us? *[My note: “John” has mentioned on Discord that he would consider reading it aloud. It is noted for being a work of angst amongst the lighter-hearted stories. As an “Old School” fan, I am a bit shocked by this, as we had a rule to never cross the streams, but, as we have touched on earlier, this fandom is unique in its interaction with its creators.]*
3. Do you relate to John?
4. Did the show’s success surprise you? Did fandom surprise you?
5. Do you have a favorite podcast you personally listen to?
6. Do you know what Johnlock is? Your thoughts on Johnlock... *[My note: Johnlock is a romantic relationship between Sherlock and John. The Discord*

has a strong queer fanbase. Some people did not want to ask you this, while others did, but were afraid to. I'm including it here to let you know that how you feel personally about the idea is in the backs of many Discord fans' minds.]

7. Is it difficult to do comedy and to make someone intelligent, yet in some ways completely inept? Have you done a lot of comedy before?
8. John often makes a sort of clicking noise behind his teeth when uncomfortable. Do you do this as a vocal tic that is unique to John, or are you portraying the emotion of feeling uncomfortable and it comes out on its own?

Thanks again! An absolute pleasure!

- Sandra



HELLO!!

Finally the answers here!

1. I cringed as Paul, but less so as John if that makes sense? I think that's helped by his immediate regret at the word, and John is someone who ultimately is a good man. His heart is in the right place, so when he misspeaks or missteps it's much more understandable and forgivable I think.
2. I've not read any of the fanfic, and I guess whether or not I'd ever read it would come down to the producers of the work having that

conversation. It all comes down to how they want to use and hold the character.

3. I do relate to John, very much. I think we can both be quite awkward with new people, and I certainly see my own journey as a working (and often not-working) actor in John's struggles to find direction and purpose with his life. I think it's a very common struggle in the world today - it's not as amenable to success and survival as it perhaps has been, and so more and more of us are struggling to make ends meet and especially to find the opportunities to really *enjoy* life. I think John's ability to find the good and find the joy is very inspirational, and so I'd have to say I really like having him around!
4. I was surprised by the speed of the show's success more than the success itself... if that makes sense? I always had faith in the work we were making—Joel and Adam are fantastic creators, and as soon as I heard a rough cut of the pilot I knew that Harry was a smashing Holmes and that we had a very good chance of success with the show. Of course, the fantastic and beloved source material doesn't hurt either!
5. I have a few podcasts I enjoy listening to. *Cold Case Crime Cuts* was a real treat and had me laughing away like a maniac. I've also enjoyed a lot of the *SCP Archives*. But I think my all time go-to favourite podcast is *In Our Time* from BBC Radio 4. Such varied content and such knowledgeable guests— a podcast with information you can actually trust is a nice change in a world of Joe Rogans...

6. I do know of Johnlock, and I'm supportive of it. I think audiences have a great amount of control over how they perceive and receive a work of fiction. That being said, I don't know what Joel and Adam have planned for us. But, I love Johnlock.
7. Comedy is my bread and butter. I've always loved performing comedy in theatre. Hearing people laugh in the moment is such a rush. I'm currently working in a screen project, and it's the same sort of rush hearing the crew laugh after a take. So, yeah, I've done a lot of comedy before and I often end up playing quite bumbling characters— not sure what that says about me, haha.
8. The second option. It comes on its own from the feeling, albeit influenced by the fact that it's performance for audio!





SPONSORED BY...



KAREN ELLERY, JHWS “SHERRY”

[Recording device clicks on, is knocked around]

JOHN: Testing. Testing. I’m not sure—
[Turned away from mic] Sherlock, I’m about to start. Are you there? Do you remember how we discussed this?

SHERLOCK: No. I remember you telling me that you had an idea, and by the time I had calculated the unlikely probability that it was a good one, you were sitting staring at me, expecting an answer. My experience with you suggested that the quickest way to get back to what I was doing was to nod and say, “Absolutely.” So I did.

JOHN: Oh, great, here we go again. Please

listen this time; I'm doing this for us.
Are you listening?

SHERLOCK: Absolutely.

JOHN: Good. Ok, so I had this idea...
Wait, you just said, "Absolutely."

SHERLOCK: Yes.

JOHN: So does that mean that you're actually
listening or just hoping I'll stop talking?

SHERLOCK: Absolutely.

JOHN: Fine. That's just fine. Ya know
what, mate, I—

MARIANA: John, the recording light is still
on. Did you want to maybe stop and
start again?

JOHN: NO. *[Pause]* Yes. *[Recording device
moves, buttons pushed, clicks off]*
[Recording device clicks on, is knocked around]
Hello, Pod-People!

MARIANA: I thought you had decided to
call them Listeners? Pod People sounds
like we're in a horror movie.

JOHN: Yes, thank you. Still working on the,
whad'ya call 'ems...isms...

SHERLOCK: Catch phrases?

MARIANA: Branding?

JOHN: Yes, fine, I'll nail it down in the edit. For now, can we just get on with this?

MARIANA: Sure.

SHERLOCK: Absolute... I mean, yes, ready. Steady. Ready-steady—

JOHN: So, Listeners, thank you so much for joining us today to...ummm...listen. We've got a very exciting case for you that came about during our recent short holiday at the seaside—

SHERLOCK: Dreadful place—

JOHN: —to have such a horrible thing happen, because we really enjoyed our time there! [*Away from mic*] And have already approached them about sponsoring our next episode, remember? [*Back in mic*] Yes, we'll tell you all about our stay in a lovely little Cornish pub called The Trained Cormorant, but first, we are super-chuffed to welcome our first OFFICIAL SPONSOR! Yes, sorry, Guinness, you've lost your chance and they beat you to it. Mind, we still have slots available if

you're interested. Our sponsor card is wide open. In fact—

SHERLOCK: I thought you were going to talk about tea?

JOHN: I was just getting to that. Yes, Listeners, today's case is brought to you by The Tea Brokers of Mincing Lane. Now, I don't know about you lot, but nothing improves my day like a hot cup of Rosie in my hands—

MARIANA: What?

JOHN: "Rosie Lea" means tea in Cockney Rhyming Slang.

MARIANA: But you just said Rosie, not Rosie Lea.

SHERLOCK: And you're not Cockney.

JOHN: Be that as it may... Both Sherlock and I—

SHERLOCK: And Mrs Hudson!

JOHN: Her name is MARIANA! Seriously, mate, what's it going to take for you to observe her actual name?

MARIANA: It's alright, John. Al menos sabe dónde está su caja de arena.

SHERLOCK: What was that?

MARIANA: Nothing. John was talking about tea...?

JOHN: We all rely on tea to get us through the most complex and demanding cases. Especially if that tea is from the Tea Brokers of Mincing Lane, today's sponsors! Their Mincing Lane Morning Blend is uniquely smooth and strong and helps us come out fighting...crime, that is!

MARIANA: Ummm...

JOHN: So, be sure to join the Co. by running out for a packet today! Just like Sherlock, you'll say, after your first sip...

SHERLOCK: [*Exaggerated slurp*] BLOODY HELL, that's hot! Why didn't you warn me this had just come off the boil? Do you know how long it takes for a heat-damaged taste-receptor to regenerate? Ten days! You've absolutely impaired my ability to—

[*Recording clicks off*]

MINCING LANE BREAKFAST
BLEND BY UPTON TEAS: A
REVIEW



KAREN ELLERY, JHWS “SHERRY”

Kudos to Upton Teas (makers of the Baker Street Afternoon Blend that many of us know) for naming a blend in honour of the longtime centre of the British tea trade, Mincing Lane. Little did they know that Mincing Lane would also have a nominal role in Dr John H. Watson’s strange tale, “The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire”.

My first encounter with the actual Mincing Lane was undoubtedly William Baring-Gould’s note in *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*: “*Mincing Lane*. Named from houses which belonged to the Minchuns or nuns of St. Helen’s.” It was not until the founding of the Tea Brokers that I would understand that Mincing Lane was, at one time at least, as synonymous with tea as Fleet Street was with the press, or Baker Street with a certain detective. And yet, in two tea-rich trips to London, I did not make it to Mincing Lane, though I have since roamed its length virtually, compliments of Google Earth.

Fortunately, Upton knew that Mincing Lane was “the street of tea,” where the valuable commodity was

auctioned in the London Commercial Salesrooms, around which tea merchants established their offices. In acknowledgment of this place steeped in history, Upton created their Mincing Lane Breakfast Blend.

According to the blender: “For this blend, we paired a hearty Assam with a smooth and flavorful Yunnan, for a cup that is highly enjoyable. The invigorating liquor has a full mouth feel, subtle spicy notes, and a lingering aftertaste. While milk is recommended, it is enjoyable plain.”

I brewed it for three minutes with boiling water (my standard for black teas), and found it strong, smooth, and forthright. It is very mineral-forward, but without the too-common tinny-aftertaste such teas often produce. It has lovely, malty depth, and, although I do not usually take milk with my tea, I absolutely recommend a splash with this. The milk fat would balance the minerality and add delightful depths to the cup as a whole. For our American Cousins, just a note: this would probably NOT make a good iced tea. However, on a chilly morning, it is as stout, warming, and welcome as a favourite old tweed. It can be purchased on Upton’s website, www.uptontea.com. Brew and be well!

THE EMOTIONAL RETICENCE OF MR HOLMES AND DR WATSON



ALOÏS WOOD

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, the two reserved tenants of Baker Street, navigate around their vulnerable feelings of affection for one another in a flawed and human manner, expertly crafted by Arthur Conan Doyle. To examine this as plainly as possible, I will reference their use of the phrases “my dear Watson” (appearing 91 times in the canon) and “my dear Holmes” (appearing 16 times).

The first time Holmes uses “my dear Watson”, it’s in a rather sarcastic tone: “‘My dear Watson, try a little analysis yourself,’ said he, with a touch of impatience” (SIGN). It is pertinent to note that this would not have been the first time chronologically, but it was absolutely the first time Conan Doyle put this phrase to paper, which is more relevant in this analysis.

Holmes uses this expression with a touch of exasperation, which holds some affection within it as he encourages his partner to utilise his own lovingly-cultivated methods. Even in this first instance, while Holmes’ tone indicates some displeasure, the personal address ensures

that the blow isn't genuine. However, the intimacy of 'my dear' might be considered quite daunting, so Holmes applies a veil of sarcasm to break the barrier—in the spirit of, 'Look, I've said it. Now I may go and say it as much as I wish.' And this, he does.

The frequency of "my dear Watson" slowly increases through the canon, peaking in FINA (7 times) and EMPT (9 times). This certainly isn't surprising, in light of their most critical moments being contained within these stories. "Though I fear that it is at a cost which will give pain to my friends, and especially, my dear Watson, to you," (FINA) and "My dear Watson, I owe you a thousand apologies. I had no idea you would be so affected," (EMPT) naturally hold the sincerest examples of their usage.

It is evident, therefore, that after this barrier is broken in SIGN, Holmes feels comfortable using this address with sincerity, which I believe is what Conan Doyle had, at the very least unconsciously, intended. In fact, it is apparent that it is in particularly emotional circumstances that Holmes is more likely to directly address Watson. For example, in GLOR, Holmes only returns to Watson at the peaks of his recount – "you can imagine, Watson, how shocked both his son and I were." Or, more significantly, in FINA when he details on Professor Moriarty and often pauses in order to turn to his companion, "he is the Napoleon of crime, Watson," and "but I could not rest, Watson, I could not sit quiet in my chair." It signs to the readers the significance of Watson's presence in these moments, as a comrade to Holmes not just intellectually, but sympathetically also. Conan Doyle has Holmes use very subtle means of wishing for human companionship, that simultaneously present his difficulty in being direct.

So, how does Watson fare? His use of "my dear

Holmes” is almost exclusively out of shock or disbelief whenever his ‘Samuel Johnson’ claims anything particularly outré: “‘My dear Holmes,’ said I, ‘this is too much’” (SCAN) – being the most precise. Again, while Watson is most probably doubtful of Holmes’ claims in these instances, the personal address softens this blow to mitigate harm between them.

Watson’s first earnest usage of the parlance is in FINA: “‘You are afraid of something?’ I asked. ‘Well, I am.’ ‘Of what?’ ‘Of air-guns.’ ‘My dear Holmes, what do you mean?’” It is in this ultimately dire situation, as Holmes acts more than merely out-of-the-ordinary and generates concern, where the question comes no doubt from a place of worry rather than simple surprise. Watson even asks again, “‘But what does it all mean?’”, headlining his fervent wish to appreciate Holmes’ position. It indicates

that in times of urgency, Watson will toss all pretence and be as blunt as we have possibly ever seen him.

The only instances of good-hearted, affectionate address directed at Holmes are in HOUN. Interestingly, it is only through the written word, in Watson’s letters to Holmes from Dartmoor. He writes, “Congratulate me, my dear Holmes, and tell me that I have not disappointed you as an agent,” and, “You must acknowledge, my dear Holmes, that I have done you very well in the matter of a report.” Watson’s preferred method of breaking the aforementioned barrier is remotely, through his pen, which is, after all, much less daunting than speaking it forthrightly. It is unquestionably worth noting that Watson has only spoken this way when wishing for earned praise. It shows us he feels closest to Holmes, and most worthy of his respect, when he is able to replicate the detective’s own methods.

Conan Doyle shows us the ways insecurities and

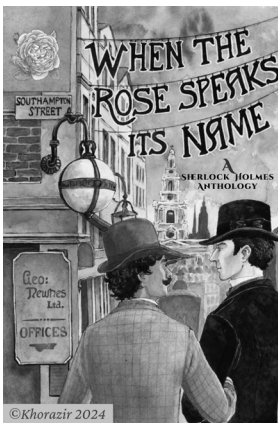
pressures can collaborate with our most earnest and deepest affections. Holmes and Watson aren't perfect beings, but navigate through their web of reticence and inner desires to find an unspoken, but no less profound, dialogue.

WHEN THE ROSE SPEAKS ITS NAME



EC BOSS

When *the Rose Speaks Its Name: A Sherlock Holmes Anthology* is a collection of original writings and illustrations inspired by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's tales. Each work interprets the iconic character through a queer lens in celebration of the timeless bond between Holmes and Watson—a relationship which has captured the hearts and minds of readers for generations.



More than a century has passed since these beloved characters were introduced to the world, and on 1 January 2023, the final Sherlock Holmes stories authored by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle entered the public domain. Given complete freedom to represent Holmes as they saw him, a group of thirty international authors came together to write about the great detective's

romantic relationship with his companion, and—in the process—raise money for the UK-based charitable organization akt (<https://www.akt.org.uk/>), dedicated to supporting LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness or living in hostile environments, a charity the anthology team believe Holmes and Watson would have supported, too.

“We created this anthology to tell stories Arthur Conan Doyle never could have,” says anthology editor Alexandra Fox. “Sherlock Holmes and John Watson were a united front against the ills of their world, and we want to give voice to the depth of that relationship.” Authors explore love and romance between Holmes and Watson in short stories, poetry and microfiction — including 221Bs.¹ Lavish original illustrations complete the picture. A full color cover by long-time Sherlock artist Khorazir was inspired by the classic *Strand Magazine* cover. Black and white original drawings by Fufu (@goolabatooo on Tumblr) bring a moment from each short story to life, following in the footsteps of Sydney Paget and other illustrators who made Sherlock Holmes so real to countless readers.

Authors Calais Reno, A.C. McGrath, Carissa Wing, Sam Gracie, Rita Smith, Shai Porter, Jaco Mismeander, SC Taylor, SM Lawson, Linda Crate, Atlin Merrick, Booker Wegner and many more (including some whose



“He took my hand in his as the curtain rose.” From “Holmes on Holiday” by Shai Porter.

work has graced the pages of *The Watsonian*) bring us new stories featuring the duo. These tales include the traditional Victorian England setting, as well as unique interpretations such as Holmes and Watson facing discriminatory laws in the 1960s and as contemporary university students finding each other through thoroughly modern match-making. Holmes and Watson come out to one another: about their love, their sexual identities, their authentic selves and genders. The works span the full length of their lives together from their meeting and early days, through loss and reunion after Sherlock's 'death' at Reichenbach falls, to a peaceful retirement together in Sussex. We see Watson with his writing, Holmes with his bees. Appearances are made by beloved characters from Conan Doyle's stories such as Irene Norton (née Adler), Mary Watson and Inspector Lestrade.

When the Rose Speaks Its Name is being launched in Spring 2024, in e-book and print on demand editions over 300 pages long. Pre-orders are open now, with a mailing list at the website (<https://whentherosespeaks.com/maillinglist/>). Readers can add their name to receive purchase links for the book as soon as they are ready.

Proceeds from *When the Rose Speaks Its Name: A Sherlock Holmes Anthology* directly support akt (<https://www.akt.org.uk/>) and their mission to secure safe homes and employment, education, or training, while providing a welcoming environment that celebrates LGBTQ+ identities.

Learn more at <https://whentherosespeaks.com/>.

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1. These are a special Sherlockian prose form consisting of 221 words, ending with one that starts with the letter "B."

IN ABSENTIA



PART ONE

SEBASTIAN

“**W***e need to talk...*”

Those words settled in John's brain like a lead weight, slowly burrowing through his body, to his very core, where they clung like a burr to his soul.

What had Sherlock wanted to talk about? Would he ever know?

Sadly, John's eyes roamed down to the bed. What lay there was hardly recognizable as human. Between casts and bandages, machines to help him breathe, monitoring wires to make sure there were no changes in his vital signs, tubes in his nose and throat, cannulas jutting out of his arms and the intersection of his neck and shoulder—his veins still scarred and marked from past abuse, swollen eyes and bruised alabaster skin made it almost impossible to recognize who lay in that bed.

But John Watson knew.

“Sherlock,” he whispered, his voice raspy. “What did you need to tell me?”

John's whole body ached. Sherlock's hands were crushed and bandaged—he couldn't even hold his friend's

hand to reassure him, to ground him, to remind him he was here. Sherlock had so many broken bones it would've been easier for the team of doctors to list what wasn't shattered or punctured.

Sherlock had been brought in as a major trauma case. The team hadn't even finished cataloging his injuries until after emergency surgery was undertaken to control the most immediate threats to his life. They knew John was a doctor, so the Trauma Team leader didn't sugarcoat his words, explaining that it'd be a miracle if he survived, and that it was no small marvel he was even still here. His heart had stopped twice on the operating table, and once in the intensive treatment bed.

Not everything could be fixed with the first operation; Sherlock was far too unstable for that. His abdomen had been packed to curb further bleeding, and a more detailed operation was done 24 hours later to survey the damage. John knew it was blind optimism to say that he was permanently stabilized now. Any number of things could still happen to rock the proverbial boat and plunge the situation into disaster, which was why the doctors were reluctant to do any further surgeries, assuming no life saving measures were needed. He was still so utterly *fragile*. He had to either get better, or die broken.

At the scene of the accident, Sherlock had been given a five on the Glasgow Coma Scale. The scale was used by doctors to determine a patient's level of consciousness based on how they can communicate, move, obey commands, and react to pain. Normal consciousness was a fifteen. Anything lower than a nine was life threatening and required immediate intubation. With that low of a score still lingering even after breaks in the sedation to test Sherlock's consciousness, John didn't need to be told how grave the situation was.

When the doctors finally left, John sat next to Sherlock and leaned in close. “I’ve... heard that when you’re in a coma, you can sometimes hear when people talk to you.” John’s voice was a hoarse, gravelly whisper. He wasn’t sure of the last time he’d eaten, drank, or slept. He wasn’t even sure how long he’d been in this godforsaken hospital room, or what day it was. “I... don’t know if you can hear me, Sherlock. But you... you just need to get better. You have to wake up. I lost you once. For two years I thought you were dead. And now, I’m watching you slowly slip away. And I’m helpless once again. You need to prove these doctors wrong. You always have to be right. You insist on having the last word. Please, for me...” His words trailed off.

He felt ripped open and raw. Every time he looked at the bed and saw that lifeless body so terribly still, John’s very essence was slashed, like a wound—exposed, oozing and gaping.

John looked at his phone. It was the 18th. That meant Sherlock had been here six days. Was that all? He was sure it must have been a year or more by now. At the beginning, the doctors doubted he would even last 24 hours. The first time John saw him, he’d had a panic attack, ran to the restroom and threw up what he’d had for dinner.

After John had returned from Afghanistan, he found that sudden loud noises like a car backfiring, or firecrackers, or shouting could set off panic attacks. He’d become a hermit in his tiny one-room flat for a while. Therapy did help—eventually—and he started to slowly poke his head out into the world, like a turtle tentatively emerging from his shell.

On the battlefield, his men were his family. When one went down, it was as if there was a sudden tear in the fabric of the universe. But when he saw Sherlock lying in that hospital bed, it was more like a black hole.

There was a lot the doctors didn't have to tell him, John was good at reading between the lines. And besides, if the doctors didn't say it, that meant it wasn't true, right? That's what his brain tried to rationalise him into believing. Deep in his heart he knew this kind of denial would only make things worse in the long run, but right now, it was the only thing keeping him even minimally functioning.

At first, Sherlock had been kept heavily sedated due to the severe contusion that had caused brain swelling and bleeding into the brain tissue. The swelling did go down- so agonizingly slowly- enabling sedation brakes to let Sherlock try to wake up. But the doctors couldn't promise that if he regained consciousness he'd still be the same.

In spite of everything else, even though he still might not survive, *that* filled John with the most dread. It haunted his every waking hour. John had been told that the worst damage was to his frontal lobe, which meant there was a risk of both short and long term aftereffects. *His* Sherlock, that brilliant, brilliant man, that luminous being, might come through all of this and never be able to tie his shoes or even remember his own name.

Fuck.

A gentle knock at the door brought him out of his thoughts. A moment later, Mycroft stepped in. For a man who was *always* put together pristinely, he looked positively haggard, but John was sure he himself likely looked even worse. Without a word, Mycroft leaned his ever present umbrella by the door. It was wet, John noticed. Had it been raining? He hadn't been away from Sherlock except to use the loo. The spacious hospital room- which must have been Mycroft's doing- had a large window, but the curtains were always drawn, keeping the room in eternal darkness.

How apt.

Mycroft delicately lowered himself into the chair across from John, on the other side of the bed.

“No change?”

“No.”

“John...”

The air hung heavy between them for a few heartbeats.

“Go home, John. You haven't eaten or slept in six days. I'll stay here until you return, and call you if there are any changes.”

If he gets worse...

John wanted to refuse. He wanted to stay here until Sherlock woke up because he just had to wake up because he was Sherlock Bloody Holmes and he was 'known to be indestructible'.

Wasn't he?

In his heart, he knew Mycroft was right. John understood the signs of sleep deprivation. His motor skills were poor, he was having trouble focusing his eyes, and he'd caught himself taking micro-naps in the chair.

“I have a car waiting for you downstairs. Get some sleep, a shower, and eat something. When you're ready, text me. I'll have a car at your flat within ten minutes to bring you back.”

He very well could have said no. His brain was *screaming* at him to refuse. Despite his internal objections, John found himself slowly nodding. It seemed to take an hour for him to get up, as if his body was lined with lead. As he stood, his muscles turned to overcooked spaghetti. He was trying to stand, but found himself sinking towards the ground. John grabbed the railing on the side of Sherlock's bed, shaking it slightly. In his haphazard scramble for support, he accidentally snapped off an ECG lead from Sherlock's chest. It caused a wall monitor to beep in alarm, and a

nurse appeared a few moments later to investigate the situation.

Mycroft stood and gently put up a hand, palm out. “I apologize. Doctor Watson stumbled slightly.”

The nurse fussed and checked the machines, reattaching the wire. When she was satisfied Sherlock was stable, she turned to John, who was looking rather pale and sallow, still crumpled on the floor.

They helped John pull himself up on wobbly legs and led him to the chair, where the rather pretty blonde nurse with deep green eyes took his pulse and gave him a quick look over.

“Your pulse is 120, and you look about dead on your feet.” She looked to a much older nurse who had just walked in and was straightening Sherlock's sheets. “Gwendolyn, please go get this man a glass of orange juice. You're not diabetic, are you, sir?”

John shook his head slightly. “No, I'm not. Thank you, but that's not necessary. I'm about to head home.” The nurse looked at him, concerned. “In a cab.” He quickly added. “I'll eat something there, thank you.”

The blonde nurse, whose name tag read 'Smith' hesitated for a moment, not really wanting to let him go, but she finally relented. “Alright. If you promise to eat when you get home.”

John managed the tiniest of smiles for her. “I promise.”

Nurse Smith finally shuffled out of the room, and John stood back up to a still unsteady stance.

Had the room always seemed slightly off its axis?

“Sorry,” John said sheepishly, embarrassed at the ruckus he'd caused. “I'll just... go now.”

Mycroft tilted his head slightly in acknowledgment.

“Rest well, John. I'll be here when you get back, and so will Sherlock.”

'And so will Sherlock.'

Mycroft must have known he'd needed to hear that.

John nodded. With one last plaintive look at the bed, he turned and left, willing his legs to move before he lost his nerve, turned around and planted himself back in that chair- never to leave again. As he watched the door close behind him, he heard Mycroft's voice, barely a whisper as he leaned over Sherlock's bed. “Oh, William... please wake up. For both of us.”



We need to talk. 7PM, Baker Street. SH

THAT WAS ODD, John thought to himself, as he read the text during his lunch break. He took another bite of his sandwich and read it a second time, then a third. In all the time he'd known Sherlock, he'd never been summoned under the pretense of just needing to talk. It was always *'Come quickly'* or *'Come if convenient, if inconvenient, come anyway'* or some other such nonsense.

When Sherlock 'fell', after the funeral, John couldn't go back to Baker Street. He found himself a small, single-level flat in King's Cross— close to Saint Pancras Hospital, where he worked. This had, when Sherlock 'magically' came back to life, put a bit of a damper on running around with the detective at all hours of the day and night on cases. They did the best they could, but things were a bit... strained between them.

Sherlock's 'death' had hit John hard. After 2 years he'd come to terms with it, but Sherlock was never far from his mind. He'd tried to move on, have his own life- something

he hadn't done since before Afghanistan. He wasn't even sure if he knew how anymore. It was tough, and little things would remind him of his best friend. But ever so slowly, John carved out a little niche for himself.

And then Sherlock came back.

When John had finally been able to live without Sherlock, he came traipsing back into his life like it was no big deal, as if he could slot himself in like nothing had ever happened.

John had a hard time forgiving Sherlock for what he did. It took weeks before he even spoke with him again. He'd grieved for his best friend for months. He had almost lost his job because he quit coming to work for a time, and when he returned, he'd spoken to the patients and staff in short, terse sentences. After Sherlock came back, John knew life couldn't return to 'normal'.

When Sherlock finally convinced John to start going out on cases with him it was awkward, to say the least. They didn't talk any more than they had to, exchanging notes and comments, and when it was over they immediately broke off to head back to their respective flats.

There was a part of John that wanted to move back into Baker Street. He'd hoped that maybe it would ease the... thorniness between them. But he'd signed a year's lease, and was stuck for many months in this rather uncomfortable situation.

John looked at the clock. It was going to be close to get out of the clinic by 6:30. What would be less than a ten-minute taxi drive during the day would take three times as long during rush hour. He wolfed down the rest of his sandwich, brushed the crumbs off of his jacket, and headed back to his office, already ready for the day to be over.

John was sure the clock was moving backwards. It took *ages* for 6:00 to finally roll around. He said goodbye to the nurse on duty and headed down to the locker room, where he took a quick shower and put on one of the clean jumpers he'd stored in case he'd had to run off somewhere with Sherlock. It had happened often enough that he'd learned to have a set of clothes ready at any time. Even after Sherlock had 'died', he'd kept up the habit. Maybe it was wishful thinking, or maybe old habits just died hard.

One good thing about working in hospital, there was always a cab ready to pick you up. He grabbed the first one and slid in. "221 Baker Street, please."

It was only five till seven when John pulled up. The lamp always flickered in the window, so it was impossible to know if Sherlock was inside. He paid the cabbie and headed up the stairs, glad that he'd never remembered to turn the keys back in to Mrs Hudson. After a couple of steps he paused for a moment, thinking he should say hello to the landlady, but then he remembered that she'd told him earlier she was leaving to visit her sister and would be gone for a few days.

It was strangely quiet in the flat as he went up the stairs, careful to avoid the squeaky third step. There was no creaking of the floorboards as Sherlock paced, no sound of a violin floating softly through the air, no crap telly being played way too loud- but not loud enough to drown out the deep baritone yelling back, ranting about how idiotic today's guest was.

The flat was quiet and still. The only lights on were the kitchen and the lamp in the living room. He checked Sherlock's bedroom to make sure he hadn't fallen asleep- he kept the strangest sleep schedule- when he slept at all. But the room was empty.

"Hmm. I beat him for once." John smiled and sunk

into his well-worn chair. “Guess I’ll read a bit while I wait.” He picked up the day’s paper and flicked through it, not really taking in any information, just idly passing the time.

When seven o’clock came and went, John wasn’t too worried. Sherlock was usually very punctual when *he* set a time to meet, but always loved to be fashionably late when he knew others were waiting for him.

After 7:15 passed, John sent his first text.

At Baker Street. Did a case slow you down?
We can meet another time. JW

Usually he got an answer within a couple of minutes. Five minutes went by. Ten. Fifteen.

Fear pooled inside him, twisting his stomach in knots.

He tried one more text.

Where are you?

That was followed immediately by a text to Greg Lestrade.

Sherlock was supposed to meet me at seven. Is he with you?

Less than a minute later, he received a response.

Haven’t seen him for a couple of hours. I’ll keep an eye out and text if I see him.

John tried actually calling Sherlock, which rarely worked, as he almost never picked up, but it was worth a try. Of course it went directly to his voicemail, which meant the phone was off, so he left a message.

“Sherlock, I’m getting very worried. You were supposed to meet me at Baker Street and Greg hasn’t seen you for hours. Please call or text me.”

There was one other person John could try before he had to contact the man he wanted to speak with the least.

Molly, is Sherlock with you? He was supposed to meet me. Greg hasn't seen him in hours.

A couple of minutes later, his phone buzzed with a response.

I haven't seen him today. I'm sorry. When you find him, text me that he's okay, please.

John sighed and ran a hand down his face. Sherlock hadn't given him any indications during the day that this would be a 'danger night'. Greg had been feeding him cases pretty regularly, and there was no particular anniversary of any traumatic event John knew about that might upset the detective.

It made no sense. John let out a long breath and decided he had no choice. He picked up his phone and dialed Mycroft Holmes.

Mycroft picked up on the start of the third ring. "Yes, Doctor Watson, what can I do for you this fine evening?" His tone was pleasant on the surface, but terse and clipped, like he'd been interrupted in the middle of something important.

When did he ever NOT sound like he'd been interrupted in the middle of something important?

"I was wondering if you'd seen your brother recently."

"Define... recently."

"He was supposed to meet me at Baker Street at seven o'clock. Neither Greg nor Molly have seen him in the last few hours. He's not usually this late unless he texts me."

There was a moment's silence on the other line. John

pulled the phone away long enough to look at the time. It was only 7:40. Surely he shouldn't be so worried, he was only forty minutes late. But something nagged at the back of his mind, like a dark creeping unease, that instinctual feeling of dread.

And a soldier knew to always trust his instincts.

Mycroft must have heard something in his voice. He finally answered. "I'll have my best men on the job. We'll find my brother."

The line went dead.

John paced around the flat like a jaguar in a cage. All of his muscles were tightly coiled, wound, ready to snap.

An hour came and went, then another. Still no word from anyone.

He had the phone in his hand, dialing Mycroft when a call came in. Greg.

"You found him?" His voice was quick and high, anxiety stamped into every syllable.

"Yeah." Greg's tight, strained tone mirrored John's own apprehension. John's heart sank as soon as he heard the stressful timbre of his response. His muscles tightened, his breath was shallow and fast.

"Where is he?"

"John, he... was in a car crash. It's bad. He was in a taxi going through an intersection. Another car ran the red light and hit the side of the cab."

A shaky hand grabbed onto his chair that was thankfully nearby. He sunk down into it, not trusting his legs to carry his weight.

"Is... he...?"

"He's alive. He's been taken to St. Mary's Hospital. I've already called Mycroft, he's on his way. I've got a police car en route to you now. They should be at the flat in less than five minutes. They'll get you there quicker than a taxi. I'll

finish up here at the scene as fast as I can and meet you at the hospital.”

John wasn't even sure if he tried to whisper a thank you before ringing off. He used the armrests to pull himself up to a standing position, and somehow made his legs move through the flat, down the seventeen stairs, and out the front door to wait for the car.

A million scenarios, each worse than the last, flashed through his head while he counted the seconds waiting for the police vehicle. John's mind reeled with possibilities. Sherlock could die on the way to hospital, he could die on the operating table, he could die before John ever got to say goodbye to him.

When the car pulled up, John didn't wait for it to stop before he opened the door and hopped in, yelling, “St. Mary's Hospital! Run your lights and sirens!” There was a part of John deep inside that knew it was wrong for the policeman to do it, since they weren't on their way to a call, and he really had no authority to tell the policeman to do so. But right now, John couldn't be arsed to care. Anything to get to the hospital as fast as possible. The policeman obeyed, lights and sirens blaring as they weaved through London's evening traffic.

What should have been a twenty minute drive took just under ten. John jumped out of the car as it pulled into the A&E, his eyes frantically searching for a nurse while he ran through the automatic sliding doors, when he saw the imposing form of Mycroft Holmes walking towards him.

John's whole body tensed, anticipating the news he knew he could never prepare for.

“He's in surgery now,” Mycroft said, forgoing any unnecessary greeting. “I've been told his heart stopped twice.” There was a pause as the world seemed to slow

down. “He'll probably be in surgery for a bit longer, so you might as well get comfortable, Doctor Watson.”

When John was finally able to speak, he ran his tongue over his dry lips. “Will we get to see him when he comes out?”

“They didn't say. We may not get to attend to him for a while, yet. They'll wait until he's more stable. I have a feeling that we are going to have a long night here.” Without another word, Mycroft turned around and found a seat in the waiting area, which was thankfully mostly empty due to the time of night. John willed his feet to move and followed, collapsing into a chair with an empty space between them.

“So, now we wait.”

“Yes. Now we wait. I've arranged for us to have a private sitting area where we can be a bit more secluded, but it's still being prepared, so it won't be ready for about an hour. I've already informed the staff that when Detective Inspector Lestrade arrives, he is to be brought to us immediately.”

I guess 'The British Government' will have to mingle with the commoners for awhile.

When the waiting room was ready, they were taken by a young dark-haired nurse whose name John didn't catch to what looked like a family sitting area- a small room with a couch, a few comfortable chairs, a television, and various magazines and toys for kids. The heavy door cut out the worst of the noise from the hospital on the other side. It was a little oasis in the middle of the pain and suffering surrounding them. The room was deathly quiet until they heard a soft knock on the door. Both John and Mycroft tensed, ready for more bad news. When it opened, a different nurse showed Greg inside.

“Thanks.” He nodded as the nurse left, closing the

door behind her. He looked over to Mycroft. “So. Any news?”

Mycroft repeated what he'd told John. The doctor watched Greg's face go paler and paler with every sentence. When he was done, Greg flopped down onto the couch.

“That bad, eh?” He ran a hand through his salt and pepper hair. “Well, he's a tough bloke. If anyone can make it through this, it's Sherlock Holmes, yeah?”

John could only hope he was right.



SECRETLY, John was glad there was no window in the waiting room. He purposefully kept his back to the only clock in the tiny room- he didn't want to know how long it was taking to do what he could imagine was a frantic scramble to control bleeding, set major fractures, and address any injuries to the heart, lungs, and other organs. Still, he found himself twisting his torso and looking over his shoulder every once in a while, frowning every time another forty five minutes or an hour had gone by since last he checked.

3:15. Still several hours before dawn. It wouldn't be too long before the city would wake up, stretching its limbs and coming alive.

And John still felt like he was tumbling forever.



A LIGHT RAPPING on the door jolted John into sudden wakefulness. He hadn't even realized how tired and drained he was. Quickly he shook his head and rubbed his eyes, bracing for the news they were about to receive.

A man in clean operating scrubs strode in. Immediately, all the air in the room left, three bodies stiffened.

“Good morning. I'm Doctor Phillip Williams, Mr Holmes' chief surgeon.” John shifted towards the edge of his seat.

“Mr Holmes is in the ICU right now. He has quite an extensive list of injuries. I'll just go over the basics, and we can talk about the details later.” He halted for a moment before continuing.

“His spleen had to be removed due to a bleeding rupture, but the lung contusion required no immediate surgical measures, so he was spared a thoractomy. We'll likely have to do another laparotomy tomorrow to have a closer look at everything else. Right now he's too unstable for anything else other than controlling the most immediate, life-threatening issues.

“There are numerous fractures, including several ribs, which will likely delay weaning him off a respirator. However, what we're most worried about is the traumatic brain injury. There's a hemorrhaged contusion with a significant amount of swelling, which is likely to get worse. We have to wait until the intracranial pressure stabilizes before we can assess his consciousness again. The longer that takes, the more likely the severity of the damage.

“No surgery was needed for it at this stage, but a decompressive craniotomy might be necessary if we can't control the pressure with more conservative measures. The CT scan taken in the initial trauma stages will only tell us so much; the true extent to which he'll be affected is simply unknown right now.

“The profuse bleeding into his abdomen from the ruptured spleen which may still lead to cardiac arrest might have caused further damage to the injured brain

tissue. We'll do an MRI done later, but only after we're satisfied that he's stable." There was an all-too-brief pause and the doctor took a deep breath.

"If he can get through the first 24 hours, we'll have a better idea of his long-term prognosis. I'm not going to mince words. At this moment, his outlook is not good. He needs to have more surgeries to fix his shattered bones and damaged organs. But we can't risk it until he's more stable." He took one more breath and looked around the room, three sets of eyes fixated on the doctor, and what he was going to say next. "I'm sorry. I wish I had better news. The damage was considerable, and we're working as hard as we can to help him recover. All we can do is wait."

It was Mycroft who finally spoke up. "When can we see him?"

"The ICU staff are still getting him settled in, but I can take two of you to him in about fifteen minutes, only for a brief visit. It's still touch-and-go with him, and he's under the equivalent of general anaesthesia right now.

Greg cleared his throat. "I... ah... I should probably be getting back anyway. My shift starts soon. I'll try to come back later, yeah?" He rubbed a hand nervously through his short hair. "Just... um... send along my best wishes." Awkwardly, he hurried out of the room.

Mycroft groaned almost imperceptibly as he got to his feet. "I suppose we're ready when you are, Doctor."

He almost sounds composed.

Almost.



JOHN DIDN'T REMEMBER the ride back to his flat. On the way, he passed the hospital where he worked. At least he *had* been working there. Considering he hadn't shown up

for his job in what was soon to be a week- going by the night sky from the car window- he wasn't even sure he still had a job.

He really didn't care.

Fumbling fingers eventually found the lock on his door, and immediately John stumbled onto his bed. A little part of his mind was screaming at him that he'd promised the nurses he'd eat something. But he wasn't the least bit hungry. He was tired, so very tired.

He hadn't even bothered to take off his shoes when he had collapsed diagonally on the mattress, on top of the sheets, his head missing the pillows.

And there he slept.

And then the nightmares came.

I'm on top of St. Barts.

I'm falling

Falling

Falling

Through the concrete

Through the earth

Deeper

Deeper

Into the fiery pits of Hell.

John woke with a jolt. He bolted upright, his hair matted with sweat, his chest heaving. One look out the window told him it was still late at night. He couldn't have slept more than a few hours. He was still bone tired - exhausted- but he didn't want to close his eyes again. He grabbed his phone that he hadn't even bothered to take out of his pocket and sent Mycroft a text.

Is he... OK?

No change.

I'm ready to come back.

It's barely been 2 hours. I'm not sending a car unless you get at least 8 hours of sleep.

I could sit here for 6 hours and wait.

You underestimate me, John. I'll know if you slept.

“Fucking bastard.” John muttered. He probably had a damn camera hidden somewhere. He shot two-handed birdies around the room, hoping Mycroft could see them. He thought about getting up and trying to eat something, like he'd promised. For the first time since this whole mess, he was actually feeling the tiniest pang of hunger, but he wasn't even sure if he'd be able to keep anything down, so he quickly nixed that idea.

John's 'Doctor Brain' knew that what he was doing was *a bit not good*. An extended time without sleep and nourishment would turn detrimental very quickly. He was neglecting himself, and he understood that it would catch up with him sooner or later.

He knew it. He just didn't care.

But Sherlock.

Sherlock.

Sherlock was in hospital, hovering near death.

Damn his body, damn sleep, damn food, and damn Mycroft trying to tell him what to do.

John threaded his fingers through his hair. He needed to at least attempt to get some more rest. He'd worry about food later.

He kicked off his shoes, still fully-clothed, and wiggled around until his head was on the pillows. Maybe sleeping

on the bed properly would let him rest, he naively thought.

He could only hope.

I'm THERE again.

Sherlock is on the roof.

I'm running to stop him. This time, I'd save him and it would all be okay. There would be no mourning, no death, no...

The sickening crack of skull on pavement,

The blood, all the blood.

“SHERLOCK!” He hadn't even realized he'd been screaming until he felt himself sitting up again, sweating and desperately gasping for air like he was drowning. His sheets had been kicked off the bed. He could see the moisture on his pillow. John took another look out the window. The first tendrils of light were starting to creep across a cloudless London sky. Once he had gotten his breathing and heart rate under control, he picked up his phone.

No change?

No.

Has it been long enough now?

No, but that's more sleep than I thought you'd get. Take a shower and eat something. I'll have a car waiting for you in an hour.

John sighed and ran a hand over his face. He picked out a new set of clothes and laid them out on the bed, then headed to the shower and ran it as hot as he could. He scrubbed and scrubbed, as hard as possible. No matter what, he couldn't wash the guilt away. Sherlock had been coming to see *him* when this happened. It was *his* fault. His

friend was going to die, this time for real, and once again there was nothing John could do about it. By the time he was done, his skin was red and raw, but he didn't care.

He dressed by automatic reflex. If he'd thought about the effort it took, his shaky hands would've never been able to go through the motions. Afterwards, he made a couple of pieces of toast and jam and a cup of coffee. He didn't dare try anything more substantial for fear it might make a return appearance. Despite his roiling gut, he nibbled half of his toast and drank almost all of his coffee and managed to keep it down.

John looked at the clock on the wall after he'd finished. Even with the shower and brief breakfast, he still had almost half an hour to wait for the car to arrive.

I'm ready now. Send it early.

You hardly ate. Try to eat a bit more.

So apparently Mycroft had cameras around the flat. *Of course.* John swore when this was all over he was going to find every single one of them, burn them all, and send the ashes to Mycroft's office, wrapped up in a big pink bow. Maybe he'd add a dog turd for good measure.

Car. Now.

There was no response, but John was sure he'd gotten his point across. He took a shoulder bag, filling it with his laptop, power cable, and a couple of books. If he had his way, he wasn't going to be coming back here for a long while, so he was going in prepared this time.

He was out in front of his flat when the car pulled up. If he hadn't been so lost, drowning in his own sadness, he would've thought it was a rather beautiful day. It wasn't

long after dawn, and the city was yawning and stretching and would soon be bursting with life. It was surprisingly warm and clear for a spring morning. But John didn't care about any of these things as he slumped into the car.

The car ride was agonizingly slow. He cursed every red light, every car that slowed them down, every pedestrian that deigned to walk in front of them. When they finally got to the hospital, he jumped out before the driver had come to a full halt. Even though he'd only been to the room once, the route was burned into his brain. His feet didn't stop until he was outside Sherlock's door.

He wasn't sure why, but he hesitated for a moment. Even in his flat he hadn't been able to get the detective out of his mind, but he knew seeing him again would make it so... *real*. He took a deep breath and steeled himself, then pushed through the door.

That *smell*.

It was antiseptic and plastic, bleach and blood. He knew all of those scents far too well. Flashes of Afghanistan came unbidden to his mind, but he quickly shook them away. As he walked in, he noticed Mycroft had actually been nodding off, but as soon as the old door into the room squeaked, he jolted awake. Immediately, the mask of indifference slid back down onto his impassive face. It was likely he'd been awake all night.

"Any change?" That seemed to be how all their conversations started now.

"None." And that, thankfully, had so far always been the answer. "The doctors are concerned his brain function isn't improving. He's not showing any signs of trying to come out of the coma. A new EEG was done, and I was informed there is no seizure activity that could provide an explanation. The longer he stays like this, the worse his prognosis will be."

John tumbled into his chair, the messenger bag clattered to the floor beside him, unnoticed. "So... what do we do?"

Mycroft looked sadly at the bed, then over to John. "There is nothing *to do*. We stay by his side, and hope that Sherlock can find his way back."

The silence was deafening.



MINUTES BLEED INTO HOURS.

Hours bled into days.

Days bled together, one indistinguishable from the next.

John got used to a steady stream of people coming in and out of the room. Besides the bevy of doctors, there were nurses and orderlies to bathe and shave Sherlock, to brush his teeth, and to gently move him so he wouldn't develop bedsores. There were physical therapists to move his arms and legs (when they had healed enough) so his muscles would atrophy as little as possible, and frequent visits from neurologists and neurosurgeons to assess whether anything had changed regarding the state of his brain.

John and Mycroft were informed that if nothing changed, there would come a day when the decision to withdraw intensive care would have to be brought up. Neither of them would even consider it. Not *now*, not *EVER*. Not if there was even the slightest chance Sherlock would wake up. Mycroft, as the person with Sherlock's Lasting Power of Attorney, had the final say on his brother's care.

Ten days after the accident, Mycroft informed John that Anthea had called the clinic where he'd been working

and told them he'd have to resign his position to take care of a family member who'd suddenly taken ill. They were disappointed of course, as well as upset he hadn't told them earlier, but they left the possibility open that he might be able to come back to work there when he was ready.

Sherlock is practically family, and what a dysfunctional family we are.

It was a gray and dreary morning- appropriate, John thought- when he and Mycroft had a serious talk. A lot of well-wishers wanted to see Sherlock, but the two of them had decided that only the most essential people should be allowed in, and just for a short time. It'd be the least stressful for both them and Sherlock. The list was pretty easy to make- his parents, Mrs Hudson, Greg Lestrade, and Molly Hooper. They would come in one at a time, except for his parents, and would stay no more than thirty minutes.

And Mycroft, poor Mycroft was going to be the unlucky one that would have to explain the situation about the crash each time someone new visited. John could see the pain hiding behind those seemingly-neutral azure eyes.

Sherlock's parents were first, of course. As soon as they arrived, John made some lame excuse and hurried out of the room. This was a time for the Holmeses to be together. Despite how close he and Sherlock had become over the years, he knew he would never truly be family.

Molly didn't stay long when she came by. John could see her heart breaking as soon as she entered the room and saw the state Sherlock was in. She spoke a few words to him, whispered in his ear, and sat for about ten minutes before she couldn't take any more, mumbled that she had to get back to work, and hurried out.

Lestrade's visit was longer, but he was clearly nervous and anxious, sitting on the edge of his seat and twiddling

his thumbs. He glanced down at his hands more than at Sherlock. John knew it was hard to look at the man as he was now, remembering how vibrant and *alive* he had been less than two weeks ago- it seemed like a lifetime ago. Eventually he had to go back to work as well, and the room returned to what passed as normal- just the three of them.

Mycroft sent John back to his flat four days after his first exile. He got less sleep than he had the first time. His mind couldn't stop replaying what the accident must have looked like- the sounds, the smells, the utter devastation. He wondered if Sherlock had even seen the other car approaching, if he'd had enough time to realize what was about to happen. He shook his head violently, chasing the rising panic that he could feel swelling within his chest. That was not a road he could afford to go down right now.

When John was ready to return, he didn't even wait for Mycroft's 'approval'. He grabbed a taxi after he'd showered, changed, and eaten a few nibbles of toast, and was back to the hospital less than 4 hours after he'd left.

When he arrived at St. Mary's, he wasn't terribly surprised to see a small contingent of reporters outside. It had only been a few months since Sherlock had been exonerated and 'miraculously' came back to life after two years of self-imposed exile. Sherlock was once again hot in the eyes of the press, so this tragedy would be newsworthy to those vultures. John guessed that Mycroft had tried to keep it out of the papers for as long as he could, but even the 'British Government' was susceptible to leaks.

Though John understood that it was their job, he'd had little sleep and had even less patience. He pushed past their microphones and cameras, forging his way through to the lobby, where he quickened his steps up to Sherlock's room.

The question always on his lips as he entered the room

hung unsaid as he walked through the door. The look on Mycroft's face told the whole story. That, and the fact that he didn't even admonish John for coming back early. Was it possible for Mycroft to be even paler than he normally was? He looked like he had no blood left in him.

“What happened?”

“He had a seizure early into his last sedation break. He coded earlier. It was difficult to control despite a quick return back to deep sedation. Even the smallest setback could cause him further, possibly permanent damage. The doctors aren't confident he'll wake up at all. It's been nearly two weeks now, and there have been no significant improvements.”

“Mycroft... we... we can't give up. He'll come back. He has to.”

The response came in a broken whisper. “I'm not ready to give up on him, either.” After a moment Mycroft added in a much stronger tone, “And I'll make sure the reporters never bother you again.”

One weekend evening, it was suggested that Sherlock be given a tracheostomy. He was going to need ventilatory support for an extended amount of time; a tracheostomy would lessen the amount of vocal chord and tracheal damage. Somewhat reluctantly, Mycroft agreed. He was quite sure that Sherlock had had enough surgeries for several lifetimes. Everything went well, no complications arose, and Sherlock was back in his room in a matter of hours.



THEY FELL into somewhat of a routine. Every two days, Mycroft would spend the night with Sherlock while John went home and pretended to get rest and nourishment.

They both spent the entire weekend at the hospital, and on Monday the cycle began again.

John had been taking short naps in the hospital chair, and had even managed to choke down the occasional sandwich from the canteen. It was enough sleep and food to sustain him, to keep him functional, but just barely. His clothes hung more loosely on his frame, his eyes were sunken and dark, his skin was pale and drawn. He was a shell of his former self.

Sherlock's parents had come up from their country home to stay with Mycroft until 'Sherlock got better', as they put it. There didn't seem to be any doubt in their minds he would pull through this.

I'm not so sure.

Mycroft visited at least once a day during the week, usually after work. He stayed as long as he could- normally a few hours- until sleep threatened to overtake him. Then he went home to get some restless slumber before it was either time to head back to the office or take the night shift at the hospital while John went back to his flat.

This wasn't living. This was surviving.



JOHN LOOKED AT HIS PHONE. It was the 3rd. That meant it'd been exactly three weeks since the accident. Mycroft had Anthea paying John's bills, so at least he didn't have to worry about his power being turned off or violating his lease. But that was the last thing on the man's mind.

Sherlock's doctors had seen almost no advancement in his condition. Since the recent MRIs had looked good, Sherlock had been allowed more time than most other patients with such devastating injuries to begin to show signs of emergence. But they warned that if there was no

significant improvement very soon, important decisions would have to be made. A propensity for seizures during sedation breaks, and the fact that he was still deeply unconscious with or without sedation gave a strong indication of significant brain damage. It was possible that the neural networks regulating consciousness may have been irreparably impacted.

The doctor's words shook John to the deepest part of himself. "If he doesn't improve, we're going to have to discuss how long we want to continue this."

Something inside of John broke... shattered, fell to a million pieces on the hospital floor. The look he gave to Mycroft was nothing short of *pleading*.

"Mycroft. Please. Christ, please don't listen to them." John begged. "You swore you wouldn't give up."

To John's utter relief, Mycroft nodded his head. "Doctor Watson is correct. I will not give up on my brother. As long as there's still even the slightest chance he will awaken, we'll wait for him to do so. As you must be well aware, there are many reports of individuals awakening from comas lasting much longer. I'm my brother's decision maker. If I say we wait, then we wait."

The doctor nodded, though his face told the whole story. John knew he'd seen dozens, if not hundreds of cases like Sherlock's, and he knew the chances of a happy ending to this story was minuscule at best.

After the doctor left the room, John gave a soft, sad smile of thanks to Mycroft. For a while, there was no sound, save the whirs and beeps of the machines. John looked out the window. London was warming, spring was ebbing, and summer would be coming soon. The world still turned on its axis. People went about their lives, oblivious to what was going on in this room.

Time moved on, and John stayed still, waiting for a miracle that might never happen.



IT WAS A THURSDAY, John knew, but he'd purposefully stopped looking at his phone. He hardly cared about dates any more. One day drained into the next, days seeped into nights, and then slowly trickled back into daytime again. It was late in the afternoon, so John knew it wouldn't be long until Mycroft came to visit. That was how John counted his days. They started when Mycroft left for the evening and ended when Mycroft came to visit again.

John had taken to reading to Sherlock. It kept his mind busy, and let Sherlock know he was there. Mycroft had an impressive library at his disposal, so when John suggested that he start bringing novels, there was no shortage from which to choose. Usually they stuck to mysteries like Agatha Christie, classics like Dickens and Melville, and the occasional horribly dry scientific paper that held zero interest for John- but he figured Sherlock would appreciate them.

“This was the state of matters, on the afternoon of, what I may be excused for calling, that eventful and important Friday. I can make no claim therefore to have known, at that time, how matters stood; or to have any...” Suddenly, something in John's peripheral vision caught his attention. He could have sworn he saw movement coming from the bed. He immediately halted his reading of *David Copperfield*.

“Sherlock, did you move?” He knew how ridiculous that sounded the moment the words left his mouth. Sherlock couldn't respond to him. People in deep comas like Sherlock's didn't react to commands. John waited a

moment longer, watching Sherlock anxiously, his stomach in knots, hoping he would prove John wrong.

Please. Please. Do something.

The clock on the wall ticked by the seconds relentlessly.

But no movement came.

John sighed and picked up the book again. "I can make no claim therefore to have known, at that time, how matters stood; or to have any remembrance, founded on the evidence of my own senses of what follows..." There it was again. He wasn't imagining things. He'd actually heard the tiniest rustle of the sheets. The book was forgotten, dropped to the floor in a heartbeat. When he looked back to the bed, for just a tiny, tantalizing moment, he saw Sherlock's leg shifting erratically under the thin blanket.

"Sherlock. I ... know you can't respond, but if you can hear me, fight. Wake up." There was, of course, no response. No movement. Any thought of reading was banished from John's mind. Sherlock had *moved*. It'd only been a tiny movement of one leg, but it was something. His first instinct was to call the nurses, but there was nothing they could do. If he was starting to come out of the coma, he'd have to do it in his own time, John knew.

When Mycroft came in an hour later, he set his umbrella by the door, and his briefcase on the table, like he always did. When he looked over to John, he was quite surprised to see what could almost be called a smile on his face. The elder Holmes' countenance shifted from confusion to annoyance, then back to its default setting of indifference, all in the space of a couple of heartbeats.

"John?"

"I saw him... he moved his leg. Well, it was just a little twitch, a couple of times. I know, it might not be anything

but maybe... it's a good sign?" When he realized he was rambling, he went quiet and still.

Annoyance crept back onto Mycroft's face. That was what had the man nearly smiling. This time he didn't bother trying to look passive once again.

"John, it was mostly likely just an involuntary muscle twitch." John could hear the condemnation in Mycroft's voice. *You know better.* "It's not uncommon when muscles have not been used for a time. Paraplegic patients have involuntary muscle spasms quite often. You said it only happened twice?"

"Yes... but it was more than a twitch. It was a movement."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Did you notify the nurses?"

"When they came in for his hourly observation, yes. They said the same thing you did. I explained that it wasn't just a fast muscle twitch, it had lasted longer. They said they'd wait until the morning to see if he moved any more, then they'd test him on the Glasgow Scale again."

"John, I don't want you to get your hopes up. It's been six weeks. Most comas only last between two and four. As a doctor, you understand that when patients don't regain consciousness during the first days of sedation breaks that usually indicates... that there will be substantial brain damage."

Whatever John was going to say stuck in his throat when Sherlock moved his leg again. They both saw it clearly. It was much more than a twitch, it was a deliberate movement. Immediately, Mycroft leaned over to Sherlock, whispering softly in his ear.

"William. Come back to us." Mycroft gently brushed the pad of his index finger down the side of Sherlock's

cheek. The few times John saw Mycroft initiate contact, it was always there.

“We're waiting. We'll wait as long as you need. Just come back.”

John was silent, listening to Mycroft speak so tenderly. It was a side of the man he'd never seen before. He always knew Mycroft cared for his little brother. He'd proven it many times over, despite his insistence that 'caring is not an option'. But to actually expose this level of affection in front of someone else was exceedingly rare. John knew it took an immense amount of trust. And for that, he felt honored.

When Mycroft had fallen silent again and settled back in his seat, John asked, “William?”

“That's his given name. William Sherlock Scott Holmes.” When he was a child, we called him William. But, there was an... event when he was six. Afterwards, he wasn't the same. He was more closed off, guarded. It was heartbreaking to see the happy child turn into...”

“A Holmes?”

Mycroft shot him a deadly look. John backed down, muttering a quiet apology.

“After that, he didn't want to be called William anymore. He insisted everyone call him Sherlock. I think secretly he liked the idea of having an unconventional name. He knew he was an unusual boy, even that young. At that time, he still admired me. He'd always liked my atypical name.”

John longed to ask what had happened to change Sherlock so much, to shape this enigmatic, walled-off man that he'd become. But he knew now was not the time. Understanding he would get no answer, he kept quiet.

“Do you think... calling him William might stir his memories?” John finally asked after a pause.

Mycroft shrugged noncommittally. "It is worth a try."

There was another small movement, this time it was his opposite arm. Despite Mycroft's warning, John couldn't help but let the hope that burgeoned within him bloom and warm his happiness starved soul. It felt as though his body had been encased in a block of ice since the day of the accident. Each little movement, every twitch Sherlock made cracked the surface, melted the glacier by infinitesimal measures.

He was no longer sedated, since he had stopped reacting to the sedation breaks with seizures or a rise in his intracranial pressure. The ICP meter that had been measuring it had been removed once there had been no incident for days after the sedatives had been completely withdrawn. The fact that he had begun breathing on his own meant that the respiratory center of his brain was intact, but that promised nothing when it came to consciousness or anything more demanding than simple respiration.

Mycroft stayed through the night, despite having work in the morning. He'd never admit it, but he was as anxious as John for those tiny movements to mean something substantial. They didn't speak, John didn't read. They were antsy, fidgety, barely able to stay in their seats, but too damn exhausted to actually move. There wasn't any change through the night. Sherlock twitched a couple of times, but it was nothing consequential.

In the morning, John heard Mycroft go into the hallway and call Anthea, informing her that he was staying at the hospital today. John knew he shouldn't listen in, but after seeing the softer side of Mycroft, he found himself fascinated by the man, wondering what else he might be hiding behind that impassive mask of posh indifference.

Mycroft cut his phone call short when he saw a doctor

walk up to Sherlock's door, ready to reassess him. He followed the doctor in, watching intently as they tested Sherlock. He didn't open his eyes. He did groan softly and purposefully curled away when given a painful stimulus—the doctor pressing his finger hard onto a spot at the lower right side of his brow. When the doctor had completed his exam, Sherlock was given a six. It was a slight improvement, though there was still a very long way to go.

Something warm and protective coiled deep inside of John. *His* Sherlock was coming back. It was slow, and there was no telling what state he'd be in when he woke, but he was improving. *Finally*, there was something to curl around and hold onto tight.

It was *hope*.



OVER THE WEEKEND, Sherlock continued to improve in tiny increments, minuscule forward movements. John had taken to holding Sherlock's hand, hoping he would try to squeeze. He asked Sherlock to try, though he never got a response.

In the evening, The first twinges of sleep were starting to cloud John's thoughts, when he felt a slight press on his fingers. Any thoughts of rest were gone in an instant. His heart leapt out of his chest, thudding hard against his sternum.

“Sherlock, you're almost there. Just a little more, mate.”

The weekend came and went. Mycroft continued to do what work he could from the hospital room. The doctors were worried that he still hadn't opened his eyes, which was one of the three main criteria on the coma scale, but he'd continued to improve in the other two criteria, so they were

still somewhat optimistic. He was moving more- not doing anything very purposeful or coordinated. He had grimaced in response to pain, which was most certainly hopeful.

Because of the improvements Sherlock had made over the weekend, John had not taken his usual flat visit. The first few weeks, he had been so terribly afraid to leave, fearing that Sherlock would die while he was gone. Now he was afraid to leave, because Sherlock might actually *wake up* while he was away.

And that kept him going through a few more sleepless nights.

To be continued...

TEAKUS



HAIKUS WITH TEA THEMES

THE TEA BROKERS OF MINCING LANE

Each day I drink tea
But I don't ever haiku
About it. Sorry.
~*Peggy MacFarlane*

On delicate leaves
I find faraway kingdoms
in my humble cup.
~*Veronica Educatrix-Jones*

Damn it, Trader Joe's!
Where's the Irish Breakfast Tea?
Huzzah, I found it!
~*Mickey Fromkin*

If the mug's empty,
Put the kettle on to boil.
Can't live without tea.
~*Mickey Fromkin*

Boil water, add leaves
Steep, strain, then fill your cup as
Steam rises and roils.

~*Max Magee*

Winter solitude
In a world of one color
A cup of hot tea

~*Pf Doyle*

Warm now, and tea-drunk
On oolong and friends' laughter,
My wintery heart thaws.

~*Karen Ellery*

Wind howling outside
Steam rises from a warm cup;
Damn my fogged glasses!

~*John Sebastian Moran*

Holmes has solved the case.
Watson cosily scribbles.
Hudson pours the tea.

~*Karen Ellery*

Baker Street Christmas:
Shillings, tea, and mistletoe
For the Irregulars.

~*Karen Ellery*

MAGIC AND THE OCCULT IN SHERLOCKIAN FICTION



PART FIVE: 'WARLOCK HOLMES' BY G. S.
DENNING

EVADARE VOLNEY, JHWS "ELLERY"

Editor's Note: this is Part Five in a series addressing magic and the occult.

W elcome to the fifth installment of my series on Magic and the Occult in Sherlockian Fiction. So far, we have seen the Watsons as Elemental Magicians, we have sent Holmes and Watson off on quests of their own with real-life occultist Aleister Crowley as their detective partner, and we've spent time in an alternate-reality version of not-quite-Holmes and Watson set in a Britain that retained its pre-Roman religion and magic.

In this essay, I'll be discussing a five-book series that turns pastiche into parody with a serving of a cascading descent into madness, and every page of it is a fierce delight.

Author G. S. Denning, a very well-versed canon scholar and comedian by trade, dedicates his work in part to Douglas Adams and Terry Pratchett—the two authors who convinced him that his love of comedy and his love of science fiction and fantasy could be combined. Denning's

writing is darker and more visceral than either, and his *Warlock Holmes* series joins this holy genre trifecta in the category of comedy horror.

Warlock Holmes is not a genius. Far from it, in fact.

Our narrator, Dr. John Heimdal Watson, on the other hand, is.

As the series begins, in *A Study in Brimstone*, Watson is a mostly-secular veteran of a mostly-normal war from a mostly-normal medical school who falls on hard times and finds himself in desperate need of lodgings. But not before dropping a note to the future. We already know from page one that this story will hit familiar beats while taking us down on a long journey to hell, for this Watson apologizes to us for having doomed the world. We just don't know quite how this will happen. And how hilarious it will be.

Initially, our Watson is very recognizable, and he will eventually guide us through all five tragic-comic volumes. In the first two books at least, the series sticks closely to the stories we know, though it completely turns them inside out, transforming their very flesh and bone. If you have the slightest winking of a morbid sense of humor, and yet cannot cackle at the gruesome twists and turns of "The Adventure of the _eckled _and" or "Silver Blaze: Murder Horse", then I think our aesthetic senses widely diverge. Each volume contains multiple stories, and their source story is readily recognizable from the titles, yet their contents are not so much parodies as from-the-ground-up eviscerations and reanimations. Familiar characters appear in unfamiliar forms, such as the Scotland Yard stalwarts Torg Groggson (an ogre with a heart of gold and a brain of solid rock) and the sanguine Vladislav Lestrade (who knows a shocking amount about blood types and prefers to avoid sunlight). Mrs Hudson appears to be more or less a normal human, albeit a

vicious one, and not at all a fan of Warlock's unofficial assistant, Wiggles the wererat.

This series, however, is far more than an alternate-universe retelling of the Canon. The books are not stand-alone past a certain point, and there is a desperate, doomed destiny that builds and builds...

Oh, wait. Like Dr Watson in the prologue, I am getting a bit ahead of myself. First, you'll need to know more about Warlock Holmes. Though it appears that Watson is the real deductive mastermind and Holmes a bit of an idiot - he just happens to be an extremely powerful sorcerer. This is largely accidental, due to the immense numbers of demons who possess him. Holmes is an alchemist who tinkers with foul potions in his flat, plays the accordion at all hours, and occasionally poisons himself—not with cocaine and morphine, but with arsenic, bleach, cyanide—whatever can calm the demon voices for a moment. It would kill a regular human many times over, but mostly it just makes him weak and clumsy. He subsists exclusively on soup and toast. And, against his better judgment, Watson comes to love him.

But neither is our Watson all he appears at first, and I think it's in the last story in the first book (“Charles Augustus Milverton: Soulbinder”) that he truly starts to come to terms with Holmes' chaotic magic as a permanent force in his life. This is when the backstories of Sebastian Moran, Irene Adler, and, most importantly of all, James Moriarty (the most powerful of the demons inhabiting Holmes' body) start to emerge with their own stories to tell.

This story escalates quickly to a point of near absurdity, where Watson is himself addicted to a seven percent solution of the mummified remains of an ancient sorcerer and has prophetic dreams about American detective Allan Pinkerton as a Sauron figure controlling

nine cowboy Ringwraiths in black, and the tragic Sholto brothers are half-human descendants of a greed demon who died when the last of the Agra treasure was stolen, and Irene Adler was the granddaughter of a Toymaker who trafficked in ancient spirits... though if you read carefully, it was very well set up from the first.

In the eye of the storm, this Holmes and this Watson build up a symbiotic relationship of their own that resembles the one we know so very intimately with all its closeness, mutual understanding, fond exasperation, and deep care. Watson is concerned when Holmes nearly blows himself up and winds up for a while with legs that bend backwards - and how could he not be? He is worried every time his friend intentionally uses magic as a shortcut, for with every blast a lock or sleight of hand (an infinitesimal glimpse of what he could do), it creates another little crack in the wall between the world of reason and the dimensions of cosmic horror. Domestic bliss can't last long under these conditions.

It's in the title story of the third book, *My Grave Ritual*, that Watson begins to understand that he is doomed with a capital D. For all his attempts to avoid it, destiny has noticed him: and that's never good. From this point on, the uncanny horrors of Holmes' inter-dimensional existence begin to overtake him as well, and his destiny is no longer his alone. "A Scandal in Boh-grah-grah-grah" links him with Irene Adler as he and Holmes defeat a dynasty of inbred Lovecraftian fish-people royalty. As he himself spirals into madness, the cruel irony is that he understands Holmes better - and is less able to help him. Or himself.

By the time we reach *The Sign of Nine*, the various side effects of their demonic possessions and Eldritch drug addiction have them almost physically helpless. It's at this point that Holmes tries to send Watson away. But Holmes'

offer upon Watson's first moving in— "give me a sovereign and you can stay as long as you please"— is a magical geas. Like a jilted lover who simply *refuses* to be jilted, Watson stubbornly stays.

It all comes to a terrible head in *The Finality Problem*, the darkest book of the five (though still full of moments of levity - "The Adventure of the F***ing Men" gives us the gift of a secret code based in crudely drawn m/m pornography).

As you can see, the Warlock Holmes series begins as a clever pastiche and quickly pushes the reader into the realm of brave and crazy. With touching moments and deeply emotional insights into their past and present lives, this story never loses the key components of the Holmes/Watson dynamic within its dark and often hilarious vision.



WARLOCK HOLMES STORY ORDER

A Study in Brimstone (2016)

- "A Study in Brimstone"
- "The Adventure of the Resident Sacrifice"
- "The Case of the Cardboard...Case"
- "The Adventure of the Yellow Bastard"
- "The Adventure of the _eckled _and"
- "Charles Augustus Milverton: Soulbinder"

THE HELL-HOUND of the Baskervilles (2017)

- "The Adventure of the Blackened Beryls"
- "Silver Blaze: Murder Horse"
- "The Reigateway to Another World"

“The Adventure of the Solitary Tricyclist”

“The Hell-hound of the Baskervilles”

“Part 1: From the Journal of DR. John Watson”

“Part 2: From some Nebulous Undefined Source”

“Part 3: Once Again, from the Journals of DR. John Watson”

MY GRAVE RITUAL (2018)

“The Adventure of the Navel-Starer”

“The Adventure of Blue Gob-Runkle”

“The Adventure of the Disgusting Stain”

“The Adventure of My Grave Ritual”

“The Adventure of the Copper’s Screeches”

“The Adventure of the Read Heads’ League”

“The Adventure of the Three Apprentices”

“A Scandal in Boh-grah-grah-grah”

THE SIGN of Nine (2019)

“The Adventure of the Noble Arse-Face”

“The Toymaker”

“The Adventure of Beppo vs. Napoleon (A Fight in Six Rounds)”

“The Devil and the Neophyte”

“The Adventure of Black Peter Blackguard McNotVeryNice”

“The Gang”

“The Adventure of the RIng of Red Faction”

“The Detective”

“The Sign of Nine”

THE FINALITY PROBLEM (2020)

- “The Man with the Twisted...Everything”
- “The Adventure of the Lying Detective”
- “The Boggart Valley Mystery”
- “The Engineer’s Dumb”
- “The Adventure of the F***ing Men”
- “The Adventure of the Margarine Stone”
- “The Adventure of the True Garrideb”
- “The Adventure of that Stockbroker Jerk”
- “The Finality Problem”

THE LIGHTED WINDOWS



ALFREDO HAMILL, JHWS "CARMINE"

"The windows were brilliantly lit." (SCAN)

Whenever he chanced to pass through Baker Street, Inspector Lestrade frequently raised his eyes to the well-known first-floor windows of 221B, thinking back to the many times he had turned to Sherlock Holmes for help — especially for those cases he could make no sense of. Three years had now passed since Holmes's sudden disappearance with its tragic ending— just when they had managed to arrest the infamous gang of Professor Moriarty. Seeing those windows again made him feel sad, thinking of how grave a loss it had been. He had never really been able to fully understand Holmes's methods, but, nonetheless, he had always looked on him as a trusted friend rather than just a cold-minded consultant or criminal expert.

Once, though, not long after Holmes's disappearance, he was quite struck to see light filtering through the windows that had once been those of Holmes and Watson, and the effect was to make him feel the loss of that singular

man even more acutely. It was clear that the landlady, Mrs Hudson, had given the rooms to new boarders, sealing the loss of someone she certainly considered much more than a simple lodger. He stepped up his pace to avoid thinking too long on this change, a sad sign of how painful it was to remember past times.

Passing through Baker Street on other occasions, he had felt a certain curiosity, accompanied by a wish to knock upon Mrs Hudson's door with some lame excuse about saying hello, if only to find out who had taken Holmes's place. He had never actually done so, feeling it to be a rather ridiculous sentimental embarrassment. Some time later, though, he happened to meet Dr Watson, who told him that he had exactly the same feelings whenever he passed through Baker Street.

Those lighted windows had brought a note of sadness for Watson, too, but like Lestrade he had always preferred to simply pass by without lingering. In fact, when Watson had got in touch with Mycroft, Sherlock's brother, and offered to help in the removal of belongings from the rooms (perhaps thus having a chance to visit them one last time), Mycroft had thanked him but had said that he had already arranged for Sherlock's things to be taken away. There was no longer any reason, or even possibility, to climb those familiar steps again.

Mycroft, too, had expressed the wish to set aside the past, suggesting that Watson would certainly always remember his friend, but that he should close that chapter of his life. Watson did not marvel at Mycroft's relatively cold attitude, considering it part of his character, but it had hurt him all the same. It seemed such a brutal way to lock out the past—above all considering that it was his own brother. In any case, Watson had reluctantly done as Mycroft Holmes had advised.

Still, Watson had continued, more out of nostalgia than real conviction, to analyze various criminal cases which arose— though never with any success. On more than one occasion he would have liked to have found the time to discuss the more curious cases with Lestrade, but both he and the inspector were always too busy with their respective professions. The Adair murder, which had occurred only a few days before, had fascinated him particularly, but again he had not been able to make heads or tails of the matter. On the contrary, it had only made him feel even more strongly the loss of his friend Holmes.

Finding himself in Baker Street shortly afterwards, perhaps guided by some unconscious star, Watson noticed that the familiar windows, rather than being open and lighted, were closed with heavy curtains that completely obscured the view. He stopped, leaning against the wall of the empty house across the street and looked up, lost in reverie; this time his curiosity was strong enough to bring him to knock upon Mrs Hudson's door.

When the door opened, he expected his presence to be a pleasant surprise and said cheerily, "Good day, Mrs Hudson! How are you?" On the contrary, though, he was struck by her distraught expression, and only after a long moment of confusing silence did her face finally light up with a smile.

"Oh, but it's Doctor Watson, what a lovely surprise, and after such a long time! Please come in and have a cup of tea!" She led him into her small ground-floor sitting room, spotless but full of scattered knick-knacks of all types.

Watson felt perhaps an apology was due for having appeared so suddenly, and said, "You know, I've passed by so many times and have always wanted to stop and see how you were, but memories are always painful to dig up,

and so I have always put it off. I had offered to help Mycroft with the removal of Sherlock's things, but he told me they were no longer here, so I thought it best to let things lay. Still, the thought of you and this house has never been far from my mind."

"Indeed, Mycroft was of great help to me—for so many things—and then, you know, things go on," she said, speaking very slowly.

Watson felt he should explain further. "Yes, and of course I saw the lighted windows and I understood that you had let the rooms to someone else—which is also why I had put off coming by."

Again, in a low voice and speaking slowly, Mrs Hudson said, "Yes, of course, your rooms have always been occupied. You know, life must go on, and one must try to get over the sad moments."

An idea suddenly flashed through Watson's mind. "I wonder if you might let me see our old chambers, for old time's sake?"

Mrs Hudson quickly replied, "No, no, that's not possible. Just today a new lodger has taken possession and has brought his things, so it wouldn't be proper. I'm sure you understand."

Watson, rather disappointed at this, thought, 'How strange. Today is already the fifth of the month, so he has taken possession rather late,' and then added aloud, "What a pity! If I had come yesterday it might have been possible, I suppose. Oh well... patience."

With the same carefully-measured tone of voice, Mrs Hudson explained, "Well, yesterday there were other things, and so I don't think it would have been possible, but let me say this: If you come tomorrow, I think I can promise to let you see them. The new lodger is someone I think you will like very much."

Her promise sufficed to raise Watson's spirits, and he replied, "Very well indeed. Thank you for the lovely tea. It has been a pleasure to see you again, and I will be back tomorrow afternoon without fail."

With an unexpectedly knowing smile at Watson as he was leaving, Mrs Hudson added, "It will be a pleasure to have you here again. It will be truly lovely, I'm certain."

Back in the street, Watson thought to go straight to Lestrade, to invite him to this little get-together. After all, he too had been a real part of many adventures with Holmes, and it would be all the more enjoyable if he was there as well. Almost overflowing with enthusiasm, Watson hurried to Scotland Yard, but on his arrival he was told that the inspector had just rushed out after receiving a mysterious anonymous message stating that that very evening he would be involved in an important case.

Watson was not much taken aback at this, thinking that he could very well pass by on the morrow and invite him, and so he went off whistling at the thought of such rediscovered pleasures. A pity that Holmes could not be there, but in any case it would be in his honor, and suddenly that month of April took on the sense of rebirth so fondly spoken of by our finest poets. Thinking what he and Holmes would have done, he went off towards Park Lane, where Ronald Adair had met his death. He wondered if he might be able to find some clue to help solve the case and to feel, in some manner, almost as if he had found his old friend again.

Arriving at the scene of the crime, he fell in with the crowd of idlers standing in front of the Adair home, but even as he stared fixedly at the window of the room where Adair had died, he could not conceive of any new ideas. With feelings of discouragement and disappointment, he turned to leave, but in doing so he collided accidentally

with an aged bookseller, perhaps a bibliophile, causing him to drop some of his books. He begged pardon, but received only an angry look and some mumbled words in return. The good humour he had enjoyed began to evaporate, both because he felt so inadequate over his failure to understand anything of the murder and because of the rude reaction of the bookseller. He hurried home, thinking that tomorrow he would, instead, have plenty to be joyous about with Mrs Hudson and Inspector Lestrade— reliving, at least for a moment, a very happy part of his life. He couldn't wait! He had the distinct feeling that it would bring back something which he had lost.

THE CASE OF THE MISSING EGG



K.C. CARMINE

Mr Holmes,

If you do not respond within one hour, I will call the police as well, as this matter is of the utmost importance.

A priceless item was stolen last night from the sanctity of our home. I'm writing to you, Mr Holmes, as I'd like the case handled quickly and quietly. I believe the neighbours' nosy kid may have seen the burglars...

The email continued and John managed to read it in its entirety over Sherlock's shoulder before the detective closed it, moving on to the next one.

"It's clear who did it," Sherlock huffed. "Boring."

"Oi! Wait. Did you see what they offered as a reward?"

"As I said, boring."

John glanced at the stack of unpaid bills and recalled how Sherlock had refused money for the last three private cases. He'd claimed it was due to them being easier than he'd previously assessed—therefore accepting payment from them would be an insult to his singular profession. It hadn't taken a detective to realise the clients couldn't afford

the service, but had been desperate enough to ask for Sherlock's help. It hadn't been the first time John had seen Sherlock refusing payment so as not to strain the client's finances. It had been very considerate of him, and John adored his friend all the more for it, but the bills didn't share John's opinion in the slightest.

"So who did it?"

Sherlock gave John 'the look'—the one that suggested John should know what was on Sherlock's mind.

"Okay, so if it's so easy, can't we just go there and solve it at quick march, then be back home for tea?"

"I'm not leaving the house for a quick case, John." Sherlock sighed dramatically, reading the next email in the meantime.

John racked his brain for ideas, then smiled.

"Okay, fine. You know who did it, but do you know why?"

Sherlock's fingers ceased their glide on the keyboard.

An hour later, John was looking around the mansion they'd just entered, when his phone rang.

"What's happening, Greg? We're on a case," John said to the phone, while taking in the cameras placed outside of the house.

"Sherlock wasn't replying to my texts, so I called you. I have a case. I'm not sure if he would take it, but we're running out of ideas on how to proceed. Maybe you could convince him if I gave you more details?"

"Sure. Could you email it all to me? I'll see what I can do."

"What's the case you've got?" Greg asked.

"We have a very angry and distraught couple who reported their Fabergé egg stolen last night. They believe that the neighbour's kid saw the incident, but the parents won't allow them to talk to the kid without a mediator."

“And Sherlock agreed to do that?” Greg asked in bemusement.

“They called the police who are still here, but the kid refused to talk to them. The clients emailed Sherlock first, actually, but he wasn’t interested. Then he finally caved. So here we are.”

“Will you interview the kid?”

“Probably, yeah. I don’t know if Sherlock should talk to him. The boy is eleven. Sherlock tends to scare adults with his interrogation techniques, so who knows how scared a child would be? The boy hasn’t said a word since this morning, apparently, and refused to talk to any of the officers. Wait. Shit, I lost Sherlock in the neighbours’ house. I’ll call you back.” John disconnected and turned to the parents of the boy who supposedly saw the robbery.

“Where’s Sherlock?” he asked. They were miffed at having both the police and a detective in their house but were still willing to cooperate. After all, they were the ones who’d told the police that their son had been awake at night, distraught.

“He’s with Thomas, over there,” the mother said.

The moment she pointed in the direction of the lush, open room to the right of the grand staircase, John lunged. He halted in the open doorway when he heard Sherlock’s voice. It sounded different than usual.

“You couldn’t sleep. That’s why you saw who stole the egg, didn’t you?”

The young boy, who was sitting on a red, velvet settee, nodded.

“Do you think you can focus and tell me what you saw?”

The boy shook his head.

“That’s okay,” Sherlock said in a calm, patient tone.

John could see from where he was standing that the

boy had his hands wrapped around his bent knees, his chin resting on top of them. The position did not bode well in terms of opening up to chat with a stranger.

“I had a dog once,” Sherlock said out of the blue. “When he was young he couldn’t sleep at night unless my hand was in the dog bed he lay in, next to my own. Very quickly, he became my best friend and my confidante. Do you know what that word means?”

Thomas sent his curls bouncing as he shook his head again.

“It means I could tell him things I would never tell anyone else. Things that I thought could get me into trouble with Mummy, or just words that were too hard to speak in front of others. I used to tell him everything. Then, when I was older, and I had trouble speaking out, I imagined he was with me—that Redbeard was there wagging his tail at the sound of my voice. And I wasn’t scared anymore.” Sherlock’s voice was soft, lilting at the end, and the boy looked up at him with big, brown eyes, listening.

“Do you have a pet, Thomas?” Sherlock asked, although even John could see a dog bed in the corner and a rubber chicken toy under the ornate desk.

Thomas nodded.

“Hmm, let me guess. Is it a hamster?”

A headshake.

“A peacock, maybe?”

A smile appeared on Thomas’s face, but he shook his head.

“Oh, it’s a dog as well, isn’t it?” Sherlock exclaimed in an excited, ‘eureka’ tone.

A fierce, enthusiastic nod confirmed that he’d been correct.

John’s heart swelled in his chest. It was rare for

Sherlock's caring sweetness to shine through his façade so intensely, and with such purity.

"How cool. What's his name?"

"Spots." The boy spoke for the first time. Sherlock remained still, leaning over with his elbows braced on his knees as if the boy was telling the most fascinating story. The collar of his coat laid flat, striking John as unusual.

"That's an excellent choice of name. Is he a good boy?"

"The best!" Thomas said with excitement.

"Do you think you'd be able to tell him what you saw last night?"

The child looked thoughtful for a moment, but he wasn't upset anymore.

"Maybe I can tell you too. You're different from the other policemen."

"That's because I'm not one of them."

"Who are you then?" Thomas narrowed his eyes. "Are you a private detective?"

"A consulting detective. The only one in the world," Sherlock said with an air of pride, as if he were revealing a secret.

"That sounds *suuuuper* cool!"

"It can be. Today I'm here to help your neighbours find out what happened."

"Yeah, I figured," Thomas sighed. "I woke up because Spots was barking. There was someone in our garden, so I came to the window and the motion light turned on. It wouldn't show who it was on cameras because—" he lowered his voice, "we have a blind spot. Don't tell Dad I told you, he said he needs another camera there anyway."

"But you saw who it was?"

"It was their son, the neighbours' son—Alexei. I play with him sometimes." Thomas shrugged. "His parents sent

him to his grandma this morning, so he's not here now, and the police didn't even talk to him. I saw Alexei bury something at the edge of the garden, under a bush."

"That is marvelous detective work on your part. You're making my job so easy." Sherlock waved his hands in theatrical excitement for the child's benefit. Or maybe not.

"Do you want to know why he did it?"

"Pray tell," Sherlock whispered, leaning closer.

"He wanted his parents to play with him but also to stop arguing. He told me that they argue all the time. So he said that he would have to give them something else to worry about to stop screaming at each other. I guess he figured that looking for the egg might be it."

Cold dread came over John at the thought of what else a child might do to get his parents' attention, and he was glad nothing worse had happened.

"That is a very good deduction." Sherlock's tone turned serious.

"I can show you where he hid it! Come on." Thomas stood up and Sherlock followed. "What happened to your dog?" Thomas asked conversationally. "You said you *used* to talk to him. So what happened to him? Is he dead?"

John knew it was his cue to interrupt, so he entered the room, revealing himself to them both.

"Sherlock? There you are! Could you step outside? I need to check something in here." John hoped the distraction was enough for the boy to change the subject.

"Yes, we were just about to go do some important investigating."

John nodded at Sherlock and at Thomas, who nodded back as if he were a true detective in the zone.

John's heart filled with so much warmth for his friend that it could burst. He knew Sherlock's rough exterior was just a mask, but seeing him both comfort a child and speak

to one as an equal was truly special. Sherlock's smile was genuine as he marched side by side with his new sidekick. What he'd done back in the room had not been for show, nor had it been for the benefit of the case. It had been a rare moment—Sherlock letting his true self comfort someone who needed it.

John had suspected before that Sherlock had stolen a chunk of his heart. Now he knew that he could give his heart away freely and place it into the tender care of Sherlock Holmes.

EVER POLISHING THE DOCTOR'S BRASS PLATE



THE BOY IN BUTTONS

The Boy in Buttons is retained by the good Doctor to greet callers to the Consulting Room, to convey them to the Doctor when he is ready to see them, and to escort them to the door after their consultation. Between times, his functions are primarily concerned with errands for the Doctor and the timely ingestion of his daily ration of meat pies and pints. Accordingly, he often has sufficient time to observe and take note of the people and events in the immediate neighborhood.

We find it time once again to inform the members on the State of the Society. We have enjoyed regular virtual meetings with our varied group of Bull Pups. We are proud of being one of the most welcoming and diverse Holmesian organizations.

“For a day or two we were busily employed in unpacking and laying out our property to the best advantage. That done, we gradually began to settle down and to accommodate ourselves to our new surroundings.”

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is now free! This allows the society to limit financial liability while still providing all the fun activities and publications you have grown to know and love.

The John H Watson Society has had a recent uptick in new members, and we credit our own editor, Sandra Little, JHWS “Evidently Harmless”, for this new surge. All other memberships should still be current to the end of the year, and if anyone has trouble logging into their account, please email selena@johnhwatsonsociety.com. Our registration process has changed significantly, and our amazing webmistress Beth Gallego, JHWS “Selena”, has had to update it more than once to work properly. We are grateful to our new and returning members for their patience as we’ve been ironing out the kinks!

LEADERSHIP

There are no changes in leadership at this time. We will be setting up an email newsletter, and one of our wonderful bullpups has stepped up to take charge of that as our new “Harker” when we are ready.

PUBLISHING

The Watsonian continues to grow and expand with the stewardship of Editor Sandra Little, JHWS “Evidently Harmless.” We love being an inclusive major Sherlockian journal, and we want to hear your voice as well! Send us your scholarship, prose, poetry, or art! See our Submission

Guidelines for more details and contact publisher@johnhwatsonsociety.com to submit.

Digital (PDF) editions of all of our publications are available from the membership resources page: <https://www.johnhwatsonsociety.com/member-resources/>.

Starting with this issue, print editions are available for purchase at our new online Print-On-Demand provider.

ACTIVITIES

Brad Keefauver, JHWS “Calder”, continues to host our monthly meetings on Zoom. In February, we had our first “consultation” of the year, with Madeline Quiñones, JHWS “Maddie Buttons”, interviewing Johanna Draper Carlson, JHWS “Frita”, about Watson in comics. You can hear the recording on the *Watsonian Weekly*.

WEBSITE AND PODCAST NEWS

We look forward to contributions from other bullpups. We encourage all our members to contribute to the website and welcome book reviews, reports on local Sherlockian activities, Canonical quizzes, and other contributions. As an Internet-based Society, the website is our home and our central meeting place. If you would like to write something for the website, contact our webmistress “Selena” at selena@johnhwatsonsociety.com.

Brad continues to produce the *Watsonian Weekly* podcast every single week. Currently, the Weekly has a regular segment called “Bullpups & Co.,” in which Brad, Madeline, and Heather Hinson, JHWS “Starlight”, discuss the most recent episode of the new adaptation *Sherlock & Co.*, and sometimes invite a guest to join in the fun. You can email podcast@johnhwatsonsociety.com if you would

THE BOY IN BUTTONS

like to get involved with the podcast or participate in the virtual meetings.

FINANCIAL REPORT

In keeping with our policy of open information on the Society finances, we offer the following summary through December 31, 2023 on the next page.

THE DOCTOR's brass plate appears bright and shiny, so it is time for the Boy in Buttons to put away the cloth and retire.

Yours Faithfully,
Madeline Quiñones, "Maddie Buttons"

John H Watson Society Financial Report
December 31, 2023

Opening Bank Balance 1/1/2023	\$6,624.01
Receipts	
Memberships	\$900.00
Publication Sales	\$40.00
Donations	\$409.84
2022 Uncleared Deposit	\$35.00
Total Income	\$1,384.84
Total Cash	\$8,009.85
Expenses	
Web/Domain	\$142.93
Business Fee	\$300.00
PayPal/Square/Bank Fees	\$1.32
Event Hosting	\$1,090.40
Printing and Postage (<i>Watsonian</i>)	\$1,327.79
Total Expenses	\$2,915.78
Closing Bank Balance 12/31/2023	\$5,093.07

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR THE WATSONIAN

SUBMIT ALL WORK TO
PUBLISHER@JOHNWATSONSOCIETY.COM

The John H Watson Society is proud to be an inclusive publication, welcoming a variety of submissions for consideration. In addition to essays, readers will find cartoons, puzzles, reflections on personal collections of memorabilia, quizzes, reviews of television or movie treatments of Watson's records, Canonical toasts, and fictional flights of fancy. This broad collection is meant to attract a wide readership sharing ideas. If you are a "new" or "recent" writer, please be encouraged to submit your written work to the journal. We are inclusive, welcoming, and exist to offer new writers a place to be read. We also are dedicated to having fun. We are not "scholars", rather we are "tongue-in-cheek" enthusiasts who enjoy playing The Game. Do join in the fun. We will help you in every way we can.

The Watsonian embraces British and World English, as well as American English. Readers will see both "Baker Street" and "Baker-street", a convention familiar to *Strand* readers. Some writers use "for ever" or "for-ever", spellings favored across the pond, while Americans favor their

“forever”. But we are not obsessive. Write as you are comfortable writing; the Editors are kind. Here are our few guidelines:

1. If possible, use British conventions avoiding periods after common abbreviated titles such as Dr, Mrs, Mme, and so forth, but do use the period after abbreviated military or religious titles like Rev. or Capt.
2. Use either British *or* American spelling, but please try to be consistent.
3. Quote accurately when citing text from the Canon.
4. Canonical citations use four letters from the story’s title, which may include a cardinal number. We use the system for identifying titles devised by Jay Finley Christ, as found on the final pages of this issue.
5. Submissions should be Word or Google documents, single—spaced, left justified (ragged right). Please avoid underlining, using special effects or fonts, full left and right justifying, or any other artistic treatment of text that will require its undoing. We use proper 66/99 quote marks (“like this”) and not smart quotes.
6. Use a simple, consistent means for identifying quotes, other sources, or Canonical material. You may use formal endnotes (Chicago style) and/or parenthetical citations to indicate the source, author, date, and page numbers after a quote or reference. A bibliography, if used, should appear at the end of the work without special formatting.

7. For art submissions, grayscale is preferred with an image resolution of 300 dpi or more. Full bleed size is 5.375 inches x 8.25 inches, and also a smaller size of 4 inches x 7 inches or less can fit within the borders.

“CERTAIN WICKED AND DESIGNING PERSONS”

EC Boss lives in the northeastern United States. She is a contributor and editor for *When the Rose Speaks Its Name: A Sherlock Holmes Anthology*. A writer, analog game designer and independent publisher of tabletop and live action role playing games in her creative life, she works as a forester and land conservationist for her daily bread. An avid reader, she has long admired the observational powers of Sherlock Holmes and the companionship he found with his loyal Doctor Watson.

K.C. Carmine is a Polish-born writer, currently living in England. She loves writing about people falling in love with a focus on characters and their journey to HEA. As a member of the queer community, it is important to her that her writing reflects the diversity of voices around her. While she is a lover of romance, she also enjoys horror, paranormal and mystery stories. When she's not writing, she likes travelling, playing the guitar, video games, and reading.

Karen Ellery, JHWS “Sherry”, is a long-time Sherlockian and lover of all things Tea. She is one of the founding members and "First Mother" of the Tea Brokers of Mincing Lane, proprietor of 221T Teaware & Press, director of The Red-Throated League, stage manager of The St. John's Wood Accomplices, co-translator of the

Klingon "Blue Carbuncle," and calls the Norwegian Explorers of MN her home scion.

Alexian Gregory, JHWS "Darwin", is an obsessive anglophile who has visited Britain 30-some times. Contact him at gaslightandfog@verizon.net.

Alfredo Hamill, JHWS "Carmine", though born in the USA, has lived most of his life abroad. He has been a confirmed Sherlock Holmes fan for the past sixty years, beginning with his first copy of the stories, a 1930 John Murray edition. In fact, he considers all the subsequent events of his life to be of little, or at best secondary, interest in comparison to that. For those who do wish for details, he holds a degree in English literature from Loyola University Chicago. He has worked in Japan and Italy, principally as a teacher. His last post was as professor of translation into English at the Università Orientale in Naples, Italy. He has since come to the conclusion that life really begins on retirement, just as with Holmes and his bees. He currently lives in Milan, Italy. He is a member of the John H Watson Society and the Italian Sherlock Holmes society, Uno Studio in Holmes. His favorite author, after Conan Doyle, is H. H. Munro ("Saki").

Zoom Koski is a digital and traditional artist based in Michigan who creates a mixture of both fanart and original works.

Richard Krisciunas, JHWS "Hector", has practiced criminal law for 45 years. He retired as the Chief of the Trial Division for the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office and was an adjunct Trial Practice professor at the

University of Detroit Mercy School of Law for 37 years. He is a member of the Ribston-Pippins, the Amateur Mendicant Society of Detroit, the Crew of the Barque Lone Star and many other Sherlockian scions. He enjoys writing Sherlockian toasts and attending meetings via Zoom.

Dee Laundry, JHWS “Bailey”, came into the Watsonian fellowship through admiration of Dr Watson’s first modern American incarnation, Dr James Evan Wilson. Her earliest posted fictional adventure for Dr Wilson and Dr House in July 2006 was hailed as “unrealistically funny – a bit like Jon Stewart to CNN. Both are good, and equally different, yada, yada.” She has since posted over 200 fictional literary and videographic works connected to the canons of *House M.D.* and *Sherlock*.

Sandra Little, JHWS “Evidently Harmless”, editor of *The Watsonian*, likes to write things about Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. They have two cats named Shezza and Mykie. One of them is a ghost and the other eats paper.

Cynthia Cannon Poindexter, “Kitty Winter”, became both a Sherlockian reader and a Trekkie in 1966, and has been wondering about the parallels ever since. She joined The Three Garridebs of Dobbs Ferry, NY in 2008 and The Noble and Most Singular Order of the Blue Carbuncle of Portland, OR in 2017. The article in this issue grew from a presentation at the latter club. She is a retired social worker and a closeted classic literature buff. She may be reached at gueneverependragon@yahoo.com.


Sebastian— also known as SeaweedWrites— has been writing stories for as long as he can remember. He was writing fanfic for over a decade before he even knew the term existed. He found his way online through the original *Fullmetal Alchemist* fandom, and then discovered the BBC version of *Sherlock*, and never looked back. When he isn't writing, he is cross stitching, building overly complicated LEGO models, and spoiling his void cat, Selena. He can be found online at <https://archiveofourown.org/users/SeaweedWrites/works>.

Ely Wolf was born in the Philippines and has lived in Vienna, Austria, for half of her life. Her doorway to the wonderful universe of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson was through the BBC's *Sherlock* in 2012. Since then, she has been discovering other adaptations from different media. As a longtime manga and anime fan, she is delighted to find out that Japan has a longtime tradition of embracing Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's immortal duo.

Alois Wood is a recently-inclined Holmesian from London. With their dog-eared and self-annotated canon on-hand at all times, adaptations are always at their arm's reach. Their great love for analysis and essay-writing is what fuels their academic studies in literature. It is with great spirit that Holmesiana propels them to engage with critical scholarship to an ever-sharpening degree.

Evadare Volney, JHWS "Ellery", has been a performance poet, music journalist, coven leader, arts fundraiser, fanfic writer, and giant lobster. She stans Mrs Ferguson in the Baker Street Babes anthology *Femme Friday* and has published LGBTQ romance/erotica stories

in anthologies from Circler Press and New Smut Project (and forthcoming from Carnation Books and Improbable Press.) She currently divides her time between Chicago and North Carolina, and her daemon is a turkey vulture named Heurtebise.

 facebook.com/johnhwatsonsociety

 x.com/JHWatsonSoc

 instagram.com/JHWatsonSoc

CANONICAL ABBREVIATIONS

- ABBE – The Adventure of the Abbey Grange
BERY – The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet
BLAC – The Adventure of Black Peter
BLAN – The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier
BLUE – The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle
BOSC – The Boscombe Valley Mystery
BRUC – The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans
CARD – The Adventure of the Cardboard Box
CHAS – The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton
COPP – The Adventure of the Copper Beeches
CREE – The Adventure of the Creeping Man
CROO – The Adventure of the Crooked Man
DANC – The Adventure of the Dancing Men
DEVI – The Adventure of the Devil's Foot
DYIN – The Adventure of the Dying Detective
EMPT – The Adventure of the Empty House
ENGR – The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb
FINA – The Final Problem
FIVE – The Five Orange Pips
GLOR – The Gloria Scott

CANONICAL ABBREVIATIONS

- GOLD – The Adventure of the Golden Pince-nez
GREE – The Greek Interpreter
HOUN – The Hound of the Baskervilles
IDEN – A Case of Identity
ILLU – The Adventure of the Illustrious Client
LADY – The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax
LAST – His Last Bow
LION – The Adventure of the Lion’s Mane
MAZA – The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone
MISS – The Adventure of the Missing Three—Quarter
MUSG – The Musgrave Ritual
NAVA – The Naval Treaty
NOBL – The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor
NORW – The Adventure of the Norwood Builder
PRIO – The Adventure of the Priory School
REDC – The Adventure of the Red Circle
REDH – The Red-Headed League
REIG – The Reigate Squires
RESI – The Resident Patient
RETI – The Adventure of the Retired Colourman
SCAN – A Scandal in Bohemia
SECO – The Adventure of the Second Stain
SHOS – The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place
SIGN – The Sign of the Four
SILV – Silver Blaze
SIXN – The Adventure of the Six Napoleons
SOLI – The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist
SPEC – The Adventure of the Speckled Band
STOC – The Stockbroker’s Clerk
STUD – A Study in Scarlet
SUSS – The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire
THOR – The Problem of Thor Bridge
3GAB – The Adventure of the Three Gables
3GAR – The Adventure of the Three Garridebs

CANONICAL ABBREVIATIONS

3STU – The Adventure of the Three Students

TWIS – The Man with the Twisted Lip

VALL – The Valley of Fear

VEIL – The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger

WIST – The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge

YELL – The Yellow Face



The Watsonian features an assortment of writings and illustrations collected in celebration of Dr John H Watson. The journal is delivered to those that subscribe by becoming a member of the John H Watson Society. This active and welcoming online Society was founded by Don "Buttons" Libey for enthusiasts of the famous doctor.

SPRING 2024 CONTRIBUTORS

4thelneyj0nes	Dee Laundry
EC Boss	Sandra Little
K.C. Carmine	Cynthia Cannon Poindexter
Karen Ellery	Sebastian
Alexian Gregory	Ely Wolf
Alfredo Hamill	Alois Wood
Helloliriels	Evadare Volney
Zoom Koski	The Teabrokers of Mincing Lane
Rich Krisciunas	