



THE WATSONIAN



THE JOURNAL OF THE JOHN H WATSON SOCIETY

FALL 2024 • VOLUME 12, NUMBER II

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CONTENTS

<i>From the Editor's Desk</i>	ix
WHEN LONDON WAS POOPED Alexian Gregory, JHWS "Darwin", ASH, BSI	i
WATSON'S HALLOWEEN AT BAKER STREET Rich Krisciunas, JHWS "Hector"	4
ART: DAVID BURKE AS WATSON Bluebell of Baker Street, JHWS "Bunny"	8
A FEW GOBBETS OF PRAISE FOR IAN HART Erica Fair	9
ART: EDWARD HARDWICKE AS WATSON Bluebell of Baker Street, JHWS "Bunny"	20
SHERLOCK TEA TRIO Karen Ellery, JHWS "Sherry"	21
STEEPED IN GUILT Karen Ellery, JHWS "Sherry"	24
ART: MARTIN FREEMAN AS WATSON Bluebell of Baker Street, JHWS "Bunny"	32
THE USE OF MY DEAR (WATSON) BY SHERLOCK HOLMES G. Benjamin White	33
WATSON'S HOLIDAY Alfredo Hamill, JHWS "Anstruther"	41
THIS GREAT INTERNATIONAL AFFAIR [REIG] Rob Nunn, JHWS "Beacon"	53
ART: BRISTOL ROVERS 4thelney0nes, JHWS "Alfred"	56

IN DEFENSE OF JOHN WATSON AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BESOTTED NARRATOR	57
Abril Iníguez	
THE CASE OF THE MACAO PEARLS	61
Dr. John H. Watson, JHWS “Teddy”	
REVIEW OF WHEN THE ROSE SPEAKS ITS NAME: A SHERLOCK HOLMES ANTHOLOGY	69
Austin Shay, JHWS “Jay”	
NOT LABELLED FOR INDIVIDUAL SALE	73
Rita Smith, JHWS “Pearl”	
LONDON VICE	81
Shai Porter, JHWS “Evidently Harmless”	
Art: Sherlock & Co.	88
AUTUMN* VERSES	89
SpectralChicken	
UN ESTUDIO EN ESCARLATA	95
<i>Capítulo 1. Sr. Sherlock Huertas</i>	
Victiore G. Rios, JHWS “Vic”	
HOLMES AND HAMLET	105
<i>The Small Stage at Baker Street</i>	
Aloïs Wood, JHWS “Alger”	
WATSON IN COMIC BOOKS	113
Johanna Draper Carlson, JHWS “Frida”	
MAGIC AND THE OCCULT IN SHERLOCKIAN FICTION	121
<i>‘Sherlock Holmes and the Servants of Hell’ by Paul Kane</i>	
Evadare Volney, JHWS “Ellery”	
IN ABSENTIA	127
<i>Part Two</i>	
Sebastian	

ART: FOGTOWN	152
Adán	
EVER POLISHING THE DOCTOR'S BRASS PLATE	153
The Boy in Buttons	
<i>Submission Guidelines for The Watsonian</i>	159
<i>"Certain wicked and designing persons"</i>	163
<i>Canonical Abbreviations</i>	169

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

“Simply as a mental exercise, without any assertion that it is true, let me indicate a possible line of thought. It is, I admit, mere imagination; but how often is imagination the mother of truth?”

— SHERLOCK HOLMES, *THE VALLEY*
OF FEAR

I think many of us are well-aware of the following scene in “The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes”, spoken when Watson is concerned about potential rumors circulating after Holmes refuses to father the child of a famous ballerina:

WATSON: Holmes, let me ask you a question. I hope I'm not being presumptuous, but... there have been women in your life, haven't there?

HOLMES: The answer is “yes”... you're being presumptuous.

This film was released in 1970, the year I was born. Since then, we have had many nebulous “declarations” concerning the sexuality of Sherlock Holmes, and it has generally been sidestepped (for many different reasons) within mainstream adaptations.

We have had it joked about in *BBC Sherlock*, and we have had a one-sided attraction (Watson towards Holmes) in the abruptly canceled *Irregulars* series on Netflix in which Holmes was never given an opportunity to respond. We have had romantic relationships relegated to fan fiction and the occasional student project, such as *Furtive Festivity*. But we have not had open acknowledgment of a queer Holmes in a widely-circulated adaptation... until this past week.

Bear with me, as I will discuss the confirmation before I address why it matters so much to some of us (and likely not at all to others).

Some time ago, in response to inquiries from its large queer fanbase, *Sherlock & Co.* writer Joel Emery stated that no, Johnlock (a romantic relationship between John Watson and Sherlock Holmes) was not endgame for the series. This surprised few of us. It was perhaps his intention to inform fans as an act of goodwill—that if they were not going into the series expecting it, they would not be disappointed when it did not develop. Most younger fans took this in stride, while noting such an interpretation was long overdue. Later, Joel clarified via Twitter/X that there would be no relationships of a romantic nature amongst the main characters. He then went a step further and said he believes fans have the power to interpret the sexuality of a character as they see fit and, embracing a Death of the Author-style stance, added that he does not consider his Sherlock to be straight, though he does believe John is. But that does not matter.

It was not until we heard the following dialogue that this issue resurfaced. **(Please note that what follows is a spoiler taken from the transcript for SIGN, Ep 4, printed here with permission from Joel Emery.)** Again, providing context, this was spoken on a plane after John had flirted with new client Mary Morstan:

SHERLOCK (HUSHED)

Well maybe I need to remind you of who really cares about you and it's not sexy babe army nurses—

WATSON (HUSHED)

Don't say 'sexy babe'.

SHERLOCK (HUSHED)

—army nurses from New Zealand—it's a bunch of listeners you've never met, it's an Autistic Detective and a Spanish Accountant who is a terribly ugly sleeper for some reason.

[Watson looks at Mariana]

WATSON (HUSHED)

It really is awful isn't it.

SHERLOCK (HUSHED)

That! Is what you need reminding of. That and the fact our company is the very finest in its field. It will not be compromised by romantic attractions or personal entanglements with clients.

WATSON (COUGH)

Victor Trevor.

SHERLOCK (HUSHED)

I knew you were gonna throw that in my face.

Now, this may be an inconsequential, and to some, inconclusive bit of dialogue. After all, it is appropriate to scold Watson for unprofessional conduct. But the parallel here is not only exact, but delivered without John's characteristic waffling. Sherlock tells us he was anticipating this being used against him, which subtly implies the matter has been discussed previously. Victor tells us himself that he is between boyfriends; that is beyond dispute. And John is not the type to have made a leap to their having been some sort of relationship between them at the spur of the moment—not without all the backpedaling of a modern take on PLoSH. Just imagine something like this:

“A college flatmate being gay doesn't mean you were as well, of course. *Were*... I meant *are*. Not that you would have changed your mind since then. Unless you did, which is also ...fine. He was your friend. *Is* your friend. And people have gay friends and aren't gay. Says your not-gay flatmate. And now it sounds like I'm saying maybe you aren't gay even if Victor was... *is*... and... Are you? Gay, I mean? Or am I being presumptuous?”

Victor's immediate reaction on meeting John and Mariana was interesting, in that he asks if Sherlock has mentioned him. (Gauging the context, perhaps? What exactly does John know? Is John safe?) And perhaps I am being presumptuous as well here, but the thought did cross my mind.

So, a clarifying question was asked by listener Amethyst in an open online chat with Joel hosted by B0tler on October 10, 2024 to commemorate a year of *Sherlock & Co.*

Q: You've said previously that you think of Sherlock as queer but we are welcome to our own interpretations of characters. Representation is a bit of a hot topic in media, and you yourself know the importance of it with respect to autism and neurodivergence. Do you plan on making Sherlock's sexuality similarly integral to our understanding of this character and identity as his autism?

A: Possibly, yeah. I did say in that run of tweets that—I did initially, but I don't really anymore—that I did feel guilty, I felt like it was quite a selfish thing to do, for me to be like 'by the way, he's autistic,' because that's a personal attachment I have. [Laughs] And I know how that comes across, in that I'm like, 'oh, I've decided he's autistic', that's the thing that I wanna focus on. I don't feel bad about it anymore because I think it's really worked. In terms of that, I'm gonna give you a really rubbish answer, get ready everybody! I don't know. I honestly don't know. Sometimes I take certain strides with the character (oh no, I can see the chat all laughing at me) in terms of his sexuality, and by strides I mean they're kind of small things, but every character's having a small step. I can understand if you are wanting to see the queer side of Sherlock absolutely blossom, those strides do not feel big at all—they need to be much bigger. But everyone's taking small steps because it's a long journey. Sometimes we do those small steps and I never envisaged putting them in now, or sometimes ever, or whatever it may be. and then other times I feel like, 'Oh maybe I haven't done enough in that area'. So yeah—sorry this is such a rubbish answer—I don't honestly know. It *is* something I do spend a lot of time thinking about. Sorry, I'm aware this is not the Patreon server, so I'm trying not to do

spoilers, and *now* I feel like I'm spoiling a spoiler. I feel like we're in the zone now of I think a lot of the audience know, and I know that John and Mariana know. Like, I know that off-mic, they're having perfectly normal conversations where we're not gradually advancing the queerness of Sherlock in any way, shape or form. I think they all completely understand and know one another. But in terms of when we plonk it into adventures and we tie it back into the personal lives of any of the characters, I don't know. I honestly don't know. Because we've spent so much time in this show thinking just about adventures, characters in a sense we've sort of just assumed will follow that and will come along for the ride and sort of shape them in certain ways. So, hopefully we'll go somewhere interesting and fun with it. I mean, it's not—y'know came to me like it's some fantastical thing, quite early on. It just felt right. So it's not something where I have to drastically change the way I write or anything, it's just something we all think about and talk about basically. So we'll see, we'll see how we go with it. Sorry, that's a rubbish answer, isn't it. Hope that's alright.

So yes, per the response, John and Mariana are very aware—as they should be if this is not something Sherlock is actively concealing—of his sexual preferences. And Joel Emery himself confirms this is not a matter of dropping a single line and running off. It has been a series of deliberate actions revealing his nature over his lifetime and manifested through the choices he both does and does not make.

But, so what? Why does it matter?

Because, as I wrote some time ago in an essay for *Sherlock Holmes is Everywhere*, Sherlock Holmes was always canonically queer in a broad sense—given his defying

societal expectations by refusing to marry (not even the once... compared with Watson's debatable number of marriages) and his lacking interest in the notion.

I have spoken before about how headcanon is always valid for any individual. Where there is a problem, in my view, is when there are certain specific headcanons that are repeatedly shunned, dismissed, attacked.

We have already moved well beyond Doyle's original intentions in our modern adaptations. If you believe Holmes being potentially gay is anachronistic, you are saying gay people did not exist in a certain time period (despite clearly existing before and after it). It is certainly a valid choice to avoid all settings past the early 1900s, clinging to gaslit streets lined with hansoms (and, as is addressed in an article in this issue, a tremendous amount of horse poop), despite the fact that Holmes embraced modern devices as they were made available (such as gas lighting, a victrola, a telephone... not to mention innovation in the detection of crime, such as fingerprinting, and the "Sherlock Holmes Test"). Holmes was always a bit progressive, as was Doyle, considering his views on divorce and assisting those facing prejudice like Oscar Slater. That he had friends in the artistic community with a "Uranian nature" seems likely, whether or not you feel his famous meeting where his latest novel and Oscar Wilde's were discussed concurrently constitutes a "friendship".

So, yes. Holmes can be preserved in honey in the basement of New Scotland Yard, fall through a time-rip at Reichenbach, make up Moriarty out of whole cloth. He can be aged up and aged down. He can be a gnome. He can even be a mouse, dog or ferret... but gay? That's a step too far.

Until now.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Thank you, Joel Emery.

—Sandra Little, JHWS, “Evidently Harmless”

WHEN LONDON WAS POOPED



ALEXIAN GREGORY, JHWS “DARWIN”,
ASH, BSI

Sherlockians, like most anglophiles, have a penchant for romanticizing Victorian London. Other than the occasional fog or storm, there is nothing in the Canon to suggest any unpleasantness outdoors in that fabled city. Ladies with parasols, men in spats, cozy evenings by the crackling fireplace, and hansom cabs rattling their way down a gaslit Baker Street—what’s not to like? But therein lies the rub.

In a city whose mode of transportation was thoroughly reliant on horse-drawn vehicles—hansoms, growlers, landaus and cabriolets— one was faced with the ubiquitous problem of equine “souvenirs.” By the 1890s, London was served by approximately 300,000 horses. It is estimated that each day 1,000 tons of horse manure was left on the streets of dear old London. In addition, there were contributions deposited by cattle, sheep and goats driven to market. Smithfield Market alone housed some 4,000 cattle and some 30,000 sheep: a most impressive collection of mammalian manure machines festooning London’s streets.

When it rained, as it often does in London, the manure turned into a mud which thoroughly blanketed the streets. Crossing them became an exercise in anger and frustration, as well as in dirty shoes, pants and dress bottoms. But it proved a boon to London beggars.

Positioning themselves at intersections with their homemade broom in hand, they waited for pedestrians wishing to cross. These crossing sweepers would apply broom to pavement and swipe it left and right in a windshield wiper way, thus creating a path for the trailing pedestrian. In return, they received a penny or two. Some houses hired these men as their personal servants, on call for any householder who needed their assistance. The sweepers were also retained to hold horses and the open doors of visiting carriages. This was a prize position. Even house servants occasionally made use of the crossing sweepers to run errands for the kitchen staff, and in return sweepers received food offerings.

This mud was ubiquitous. It started out brown but quickly turned black. The coal-generated soot from the chimneys which rained down on the pavement was responsible for this colorful transmogrification. On the front stoop of some old-fashioned houses one can still see some boot scrapers. These unobtrusive cast iron objects are relics from the days of horse-drawn London, when gentlemen had to scrape the mud-infested bottoms of their boots or shoes before entering the house. When ladies went out shopping on, say, Regent Street, the female clerks would come out to the carriages, samples in hand, and show m'lady samples of dresses, curtains, shoes or whatever. The lady of the house never had to leave her carriage and risk soiling shoes or dresses.

Stone dust from the street also contributed to the discomfort of the pedestrians. It mixed with the fresh

manure and became a sticky adhesive on the shoes of pedestrians during the rainy season which proved difficult to remove.

The rainless summer presented no respite from the situation. The horse manure dried and was ground down into a fine powder by the carriages. The wind then cheerfully blew this manure powder— combined with iron from the rims of carriage wheels and the aforementioned stone dust— through any open window, where it coated floors, furniture and clothes. One wonders about the effect of this inhaled toxic powder on the lungs of Londoners.

Devotees of old-time movies will remember Fred Astaire dancing with Ginger Rogers or Rita Hayworth, all duded up in a tailcoat, black tie and white spats on his shoes. How divinely elegant. Spats, originally called spatter dashers (i.e., protectors from mud) began in the eighteenth century on soldiers' shoes. They eventually migrated over to civilian wear, where they proved effective for protecting gentlemen's shoes from the London horse-derived mud.

What's the takeaway from all of this?

Even in dear old Victorian London, poop happened!

NOTE:

Much of this article was derived from *Dirty Old London* by Lee Jackson. This fascinating book deals with air, land and water pollution and is a must-read for Victorianophiles. It can often be found on eBay.

WATSON'S HALLOWEEN AT
BAKER STREET



RICH KRISCIUNAS, JHWS "HECTOR"

Every Halloween night at Baker Street
Dr Watson sits alone with his notes.
He turns off the lights, then waits
For visits from the Canon's poor ghosts.

Shall we join him in the darkness?
If we stay quiet he won't know.
Watson gasps that something's coming.
Let's get ready for the show.

Here comes Fitzroy McPherson
He appears to his host.
He died after swimming
on the Sussexian coast.

His appearance is ghastly
Blood's dripping down his chin.
His face is distorted
Reflecting the agony within.

Listen to him closely
As he writhes there in pain.
Did you hear him shriek something
about a Lion's Mane?

Wait. Look behind him quickly
Is it time to meet his maker?
No, he can relax for a moment
For it's only John Straker.

His face is bloody and gory
Like he's been kicked in the head.
If he hadn't taken Silver Blaze
Maybe he wouldn't have been dead.

There's another specter approaching
making his way in the night.
His head's crushed, too,
Like he's been in a fight.

With claw marks on his scalp,
It's Ronder, the lion tamer.
His wife schemed to kill him
And no one could blame her.

Oooh. The next ghost is not pleasant
With eyes glowing as if bedeviled.
A grinning dwarf with yellow teeth,
his hair's tangled and disheveled.

His clothes are soaked with water.
There are bloody wounds to his chest.
He holds two darts in his fingers.
It's Tonga, if you haven't guessed.

Oh the horror! Oh the terror!
Close your eyes if you're afraid.
Here's a butler who's been suffocated.
His suspected killer was a maid.

Here's another phantom from the shadows.
Even though his body was never found.
Once was the most dangerous man in
 London,
He tells Watson how he had drowned.

Here's an odd ghoul with an umbrella.
It's James Phillimore doing yoga.
Don't you wish you could ask him
Why he's dressed in a pink toga?

Next, another ghost who's all bloody.
Gold-rimmed glasses and two deadly eyes.
In his hands are many blood-stained letters.
His face frozen with a look of surprise.

He looks like Pickwick. It's Charles
 Milverton,
Plump, round, slithery, his smile is shady.
Once was the king of all blackmailers
'til he was shot by a mystery lady.

Then a trio; two brothers and a son.
With sorrowful moans coming from their
 lips.
Two had drowned and one had fallen.
Each ghost's hands carry orange pips.

The sights are ghoulish. The visions ghastly.

Devils, demons and monsters abound.
Wait. There's another. Even more hideous.
It's a gigantic phosphorous-covered hound.

It's teeth are sharp
and its growl is frightening.
As it approaches,
Watson's sphincter's tightening.

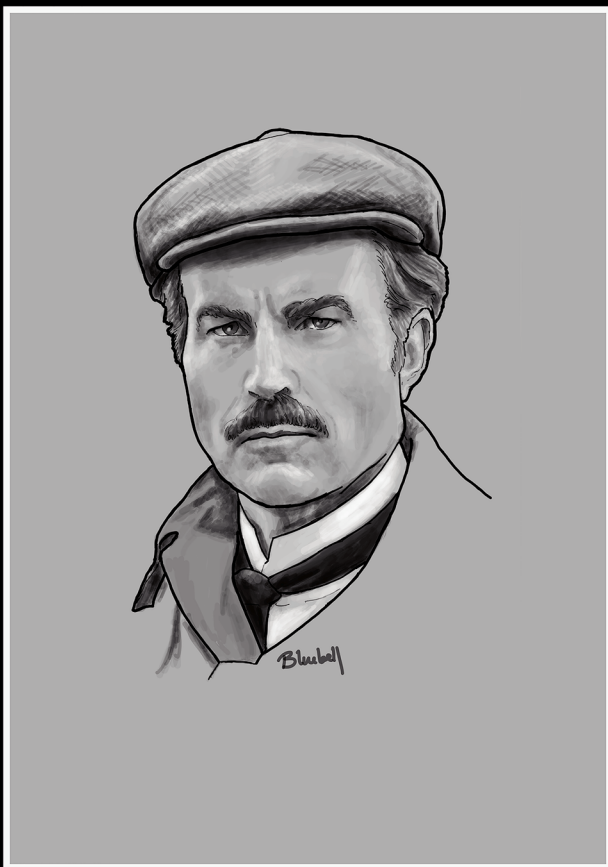
The ghosts are coming fast and furiously.
There's an older man with a snake for a hat.
A wet young couple, both missing an ear.
What's that from Sumatra? Is that a rat?

Brenda and Mortimer Tregennis
Are the next to appear.
Both walk by in silence
with faces frozen in fear.

There's a German schoolmaster
Wearing a nightshirt and no socks.
He is riding a bicycle
his head's been bloodied by rocks.

Watson can't take it anymore.
He jumps and turns up the lights.
We've just witnessed an evening
Of Canonical frights.

Halloween's finally over.
As we return to our candy
We watch Watson recover
With a big sip of his brandy.



David Burke as Watson. *Art by Bluebell of Baker Street.*

A FEW GOBBETS OF PRAISE FOR IAN HART



ERICA FAIR

INTRODUCTION

In May of 2024, the John H Watson Society held a spirited Zoom debate on which actor portrayed the best Watson. An excellent time was had by all, and, as always, I threw down for Ian Hart—the little-known man who I believe portrayed the strongest, sharpest, and most charming Watson I have ever seen.

He stole the show with his depiction of Watson in the 2002 BBC adaptation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* alongside Richard Roxburgh's Holmes, and has forever set the bar against which I judge all other Watsons. But, as is often the case, my argument was hindered by the fact that so few people have ever seen this gem. I hope to correct that, so if you have a moment, just sit down in your chair and let me preach to you for a little while.

Whenever I consider the quality of a Holmes adaptation, I have always looked first and foremost to its Watson. How Watson is depicted will usually tell me everything I need to know about not only its faithfulness

and credibility, but also what kind of Holmes we'll be getting. It seems to me that most adaptations begin with a particular vision for Holmes; once he is forged, Watson is then molded around him to fill whatever gaps are left, if indeed there are any. Many early films seemed to almost fear that if Holmes displayed any imperfection he could not be admirable, which is how we ended up with many twentieth century caricatures. When Holmes has no flaws, there is nothing for Watson to do. He is resigned to the comic relief. Happily, as modern tastes shift away from Superhero Holmes in favor of Tragically-Flawed Holmes, Watson has gotten more breathing room to be a fully-developed character in his own right. I submit that the BBC's 2002 film not only helped lead this trend, but did it uniquely and expertly.

In this production, I get the impression that, for once, Watson was designed first, and Roxburgh's Holmes was then shaped around him. No doubt part of this is the fact that HOUN is inherently a Watsonian story, with a lengthy gap where the doctor must stand on his own merits. This particular film takes full advantage of Holmes' absence to show Watson at his smartest, strongest, bravest, most principled, and even his funniest. On two occasions Watson single-handedly saves Holmes' life, and in virtually all respects Watson is the hero of the story, not Holmes. For a film that takes some notable liberties with the story, it remains my favorite all-around adaptation.

If you have not seen it yet, it's currently available on Amazon Prime or as a DVD, and I encourage you to stop here and go watch it.

In this article, there will be spoilers for dramatic moments that are unique to this film, but I'll veil the final resolution, which is slightly different from the canonical HOUN story. The film takes much of its dialogue directly

from HOUN, but there are a number of plot and character differences. There is no walking stick deduction scene, Dr Mortimer is considerably older and married to a spiritualist, the characters of Frankland and Laura Lyons are omitted, and we see Holmes taking cocaine during the case. The story is also set during Christmas instead of autumn (partly as a mechanism to bring the characters together for parties) and there is a particularly imaginative séance scene which provides our first glimpse of the hound and includes some excellent clues for the astute viewer. As noted, the final resolution of the case is also modified; it's ultimately the same villain, but several important details have been added or changed—some of which help patch canonical plot holes.

One more note before we start: I love the time and attention to detail that went into the entire atmosphere of this production, from the dark and dreary scenery on the moor to the nuanced nonverbal interplay between Holmes and Watson. The year 2002 was before we all had phones and second screens competing for our attention, and this is a highly visual film that must be seen to be enjoyed. The details conveyed by smirks, silences, and shadows all make this film unique and highly immersive, and if you do choose to watch it, I recommend giving it your full visual attention. Now, on to our leading man!

WHY THIS WATSON IS THE BEST

HOUN has been told many times, so what is it about this film that makes its Watson so special? There are several character traits I'll discuss, but the most significant one comes down to backbone. When Holmes betrays Watson's trust and goes too far, this Watson fires back at him with enough force and righteous anger that at one point, he

makes Holmes physically wilt. On behalf of decades of mistreated Watsons, it is unbelievably satisfying to watch. Once you see a Watson with this level of strength and self-respect, it's hard to return to the passive and overly forgiving Watson that even the canon suggests.

Ian Hart does a phenomenal job as Watson, starting with his very physicality. This Watson is fit and strong, having fully recovered from his war injuries and subsequent months of illness. His military training is obvious in the tactical nature of his movements, his overall self-assuredness, and his incredible speed on foot. He is always the first one on the scene, outpacing even Holmes, and he rushes forward into the action when everyone else backs away. He has the physical strength to pick up and carry Sir Henry Baskerville after the latter is mauled, and he seamlessly takes command at the Hall to save Sir Henry's life, turning it into a makeshift hospital and issuing orders to the stunned Barrymores.

This Watson is also a man governed strongly by principles and convictions, including a steadfast skepticism. On first hearing Sir Henry's vow that nothing will keep him away from his birthright, Watson can't help but commend him. At the hall, when both men hear the hound's cry, Sir Henry is shaken and asks Watson if he believes the Biblical threat that the sins of a father might be visited on the son. "No, I do not," Watson responds, with the forcefulness of a man looking God directly in the eye. When Selden escapes from the hall and takes off running, Watson aims his pistol and we see that he has Selden directly in range. But he drops his weapon instead, telling Sir Henry, "I won't shoot an unarmed man in the back." While these examples come from the canon, the decision to include them is what makes them meaningful. One of the special privileges of third person perspective is

that we don't have to worry about Watson's modesty obstructing our view of him. The filmmakers took advantage of this to emphasize how Watson's moral compass points true north and will not tolerate injustice of any kind.

This bravery and thirst for justice are also apparent at the climax of the mystery. On discovering Beryl's mistreatment, Watson slams in the door where Stapleton is being questioned and immediately punches the man in the face. Unfortunately, Stapleton breaks free in the chaos and shoots Watson before escaping. Holmes rushes over with all the helpless horror that was immortalized in 3GAR, but through gritted teeth, all Watson says is, "Get after him!" In this moment, Watson in fact becomes the more Holmesian of the two, demanding that his friend's compassion yield to logic and to all-important justice. This Watson is the determined soldier, surgeon, and sleuth to his very core.

For all of its force and bravado, the film also shows us a much lighter and more personable side of Watson—one where he is telling the jokes instead of being the punchline. Watson easily assumes the role of a friend as well as a protector to Sir Henry, offering advice, humor, and general reassurance to the young man as he tries to adjust to life as a British squire. Watson's kindness is apparent in gestures as small as helping Sir Henry with his tie when the baronet can't quite get it, or in telling sly jokes about the state of the Hall to lift Sir Henry's spirits. We also see that Watson can comfortably hold his own in social settings, where he delights the crowd at one party by recounting the list of Holmes' limits from *STUD*, even while he more generally defends his friend's character. In a delightful little flourish after Holmes has rejoined us, it also seems Watson is something of a pool

shark. Watson invites Stapleton to join him at billiards, but Holmes intervenes and confides ruefully, "Never play Watson, particularly not for money. He's an absolute demon." Giving Watson these little triumphs adds so much fresh color to the character and takes nothing away from Holmes; indeed, it makes both men more intriguing. Holmes besting Watson at pool would just be par for the course. Watson besting Holmes, especially by trickery, sounds like the set-up to a highly entertaining tale.

In fact, the theme of Watson as smarter and more perceptive than he seems is a recurrent one. During key moments, Watson stays silent as often as he speaks, but at all times it is clear that he is intently observing, with Holmes' methods having gained at least some mental foothold. For almost half the film, Watson is our detective, and he is therefore given all the intelligence, courage, and imagination needed to fulfill that role. Watson makes a number of correct inferences to solve the Selden/Barrymore mystery, including deducing the presence of, and then actually locating, a hidden passageway, and he is generally quite astute in his observations and reporting on the case. He's also self-motivated and locates Holmes' outpost on his own, without any *deus ex Frankland*, by carefully reviewing several maps and comparing them against his earlier movements.

It is this discovery, at the film's halfway point, that marks a dramatic shift in the relationship between Watson and Holmes, and turns a good Watson into a truly great one. Prior to their separation, the two men had an excellent rapport, working together smoothly during the preliminary investigation. They smiled at each other's jokes and quirks, and they were able to convey entire conversations through nonverbal glances and gestures.

They were generally on the same wavelength, or so Watson believed.

HOLMES IN THE DOGHOUSE

Watson's initial reaction on hearing Holmes' voice at the tor is priceless, followed by him greeting his friend with clear relief. This quickly sours when Holmes reveals his ongoing presence. As Watson tries to make sense of the betrayal, each unapologetic response from Holmes only digs the pit deeper. In canon, Watson is hurt in the moment, but he forgives Holmes almost immediately. In this film, Watson's righteous anger is both explosive in the moment and becomes a lingering point of resentment which informs an important character arc for the remainder of the tale. "You don't trust me, Holmes!" he yells, "I think I deserved better at your hands!" As Watson escalates, Holmes attempts to distract him with insincere flattery for his "zeal and intelligence," but Watson cuts him off midstream. "I'm sorry, but you can't win me round with a few gobbets of praise!" he spits. "I'm *furious* at you, Holmes!" By this point, Watson is so upset that he can't even look at his friend, and the men quickly reach an impasse. A scream on the moor ends the immediate argument, and both men dive into action together, but it's clear that this fight isn't over.

This is a rare and empowering moment for Watson and, like the pool shark detail, I believe it improves both characters, giving us a more admirable Watson and a more interesting Holmes. When Watson shoves back against Holmes instead of passively forgiving him, it quickly becomes apparent that Holmes has no idea how to manage conflict in a relationship. He is used to being able to just walk away from anyone he upsets, and his love for drama

over diplomacy means he often picks fights without regard for the aftermath. He is not used to having to deal with lingering fallout, and he doesn't know how to mend fences, particularly with someone he cares about. As a result, Holmes' response in this film, while cool on the surface, is actually quite immature, focused on denial and minimization rather than allowing any kind of empathy or apology. Holmes insists that his actions were rational and justified, but, intriguingly, it seems that his conscience is unconvinced, as he downplays the betrayal and repeatedly tries to make light of it to a hostile Watson. Like the grade-school boy who picks on the girl he admires, Holmes evidently feels at least some degree of guilt, but he doesn't know how to process it. He is too proud to apologize, so instead he ignores the conflict and tries to joke about it. Watson's simmering anger and Holmes' ill-timed attempts to lighten the mood appear regularly throughout the rest of the film, and the inversion of power makes for compelling viewing.

Roxburgh's Holmes is all the more dynamic for this conflict as well. Out on the case, Roxburgh is as suave and self-assured as Rathbone—masterful, dominating, and utterly calm. But when we're away from the others and it's just Holmes and Watson together, we see the mask slip. When Holmes teases Watson with more information while they're alone at Baskerville Hall, Watson reignites. "All of this you've withheld from me!" he snaps. "I'm telling you, it won't do! I insist on being fully informed from this point onwards!" Cornered, a chagrined Holmes tucks his chin and lowers his voice. "Of course," he murmurs placatingly, "Of course." But still, Holmes will not apologize and he will not change. Instead, he avoids addressing the conflict directly and continually picks at the wound to see if it's healed. When their train brings them to Exeter, instead of

London as Watson expected, Holmes jokes, “Trust me, Watson! You *do* trust me, don’t you?” The silence that follows is as frigid as a night on the moor. Too soon, Holmes.

Despite Watson’s anger, it is notable that the good doctor does not retaliate or abandon the case, and his emotions do nothing to slow him down when Holmes is in need. When the men must work together and present a united front, they fall right back into their roles as though nothing happened, and it is clear at all times that the case takes priority. They even nearly come to blows during the stakeout at Merripit House, until a sudden flash of activity in the house instantly breaks up the fight and puts them both back on the scent. The logician and the soldier can at least agree on one thing, the mission always comes first.

I pledged no plot spoilers, so I’ll leave you to enjoy the new and improved resolution, with Watson’s fortitude, intelligence, and proof of loyalty amply shown in his twice rescuing Holmes from certain death, quite literally single-handedly. But notably, there is still no apology. The final scene ends not with the tale of the Baskervilles, but with the unresolved tension between our heroes, now that the distraction of the case is gone. Stuck together on the train back to London, each man sits in silence. After several seconds of Holmes visibly gathering his courage, he once again dares to test the waters. In the time-honored tradition of guilty spouses, this time he resorts to gifts, dropping out of nowhere that he has a box for Les Huguenots. When this gets no response, he tries again, sweetening the pot with dinner at Marcini’s. Stone-faced, Watson ignores him, setting aside his paper and taking a slow sip of his drink. Both men know that Watson has all the power in this moment, and he very deliberately lets Holmes squirm in the silence. “The answer to your

question is no,” Watson finally says, cutting through Holmes’ dance of avoidance. “No, I don’t trust you. But Marcini’s would be nice.” The faintest deferential smile from Holmes shows relief and respect. Although he has not apologized, he has conceded as best he can. Any fair punishment must end eventually, and a man as justice-motivated as Watson knows when that point has been reached. Although there is still work to be done to rebuild the friendship, we are finally taking our first steps on the road to forgiveness.

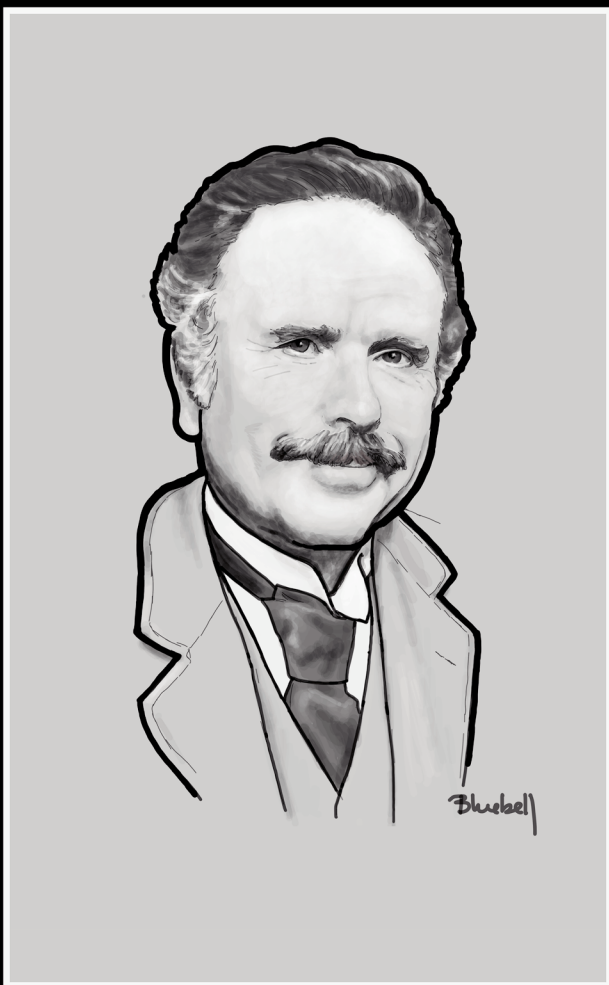
CONCLUSION

This film is absolutely phenomenal, and such an underrated gem. I love that it gives Watson so much power, and I love the collateral effect that this produces in Holmes, revealing a side of him that we almost never see. To me, this 2002 film was ahead of its time in proving that a strong Watson, far from distracting or denigrating Holmes, provides a brace point for us to explore Holmes’ vulnerabilities, the kind of things all humans possess, but which a true friend would never expose to the public. I have yet to find another Watson that impresses me so much with his strength, self-respect, intelligence, personability, and all-around believability.

This film is lightning in a bottle that can never be replicated, even though an actual attempt was made. Ian Hart reprised his role as Watson in 2004’s “Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Silk Stocking”, alongside Rupert Everett’s Holmes. Unfortunately, Hart plays a far less active role in that film, and Everett’s Holmes is very different from Roxburgh’s, and he and Hart lack chemistry. Everett reminds me more of the character that we see in the Frogwares game Chapter One: young, pouty, and

flamboyant. He is also hot-tempered and lacks Roxburgh's emotional reticence, which limits Hart in playing an effective contrast. All that said, it's still an interesting original story, and it's currently free on YouTube. There are far worse ways to spend two hours, but to me, Silk Stocking is just another pastiche, far removed from the brilliance and magic that is *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

I hope you get a chance to see this movie, and I hope you love it just as much as I did. Agree or disagree, my inbox is always open; feel free to contact me at elmadore@gmail.com. Enjoy!



Edward Hardwicke as Watson. *Art by Bluebell of Baker Street.*

SHERLOCK TEA TRIO



KAREN ELLERY, JHWS “SHERRY”

I am at The Teafling (who has a passion for tea, D&D, and all things nerdy) is serving up a threesome of Sherlockian—or should I say...Watsonian?—teas that I think you’ll enjoy.

I’LL BEGIN WITH THE VILLAIN: JAMES MORIARTY TEA.

Not only am I delighted that Teafling resisted cutesifying the name into “Moriartea” (it’s been done), but I truly enjoyed this nice, no-nonsense, Irish black tea. When you open the tin, see if you get the same whiff of spiced-apple-ringing fragrance that I did. I steeped the cup (1 tsp leaves per 8 oz of water) just under boiling (the seller recommends 205F) for three minutes. The colour is lovely—a rich, reddish cola-brown. The opening tasting notes are fruity, but it quickly resolves to a clean minerality with a lingering hint of oak in the endnotes. The minerality increases as the tea cools, and I think this would stand up well to milk and/or sugar.

A tea to keep you energized while you’re spinning your web of crime.

MOVING FROM DARKNESS TO THE LIGHT,
THERE’S TEAFLING’S FRAGRANT AND
FLAVOURFUL SHERLOCK HOLMES TEA.

This is a twist on Earl Grey, using Darjeeling, bergamot, and cornflowers. The blend is driven by the aroma: imagine Earl Grey candyfloss or bergamot marshmallows... That implied sweetness helps to balance the strong citrus-rind flavour of the bergamot, with a deeper vanilla note that lingers well past each sip. Teafling again recommends this black tea be brewed at just-under-boiling. They also suggest a steep time of 3-4 minutes, but with bergamot this pronounced, I kept to the shorter time, and it turned out perfectly—assertive and lightly perfumed, but not sour or bitter. I think this would make an excellent dessert tea, as it is sweet enough to complement a rich, creamy flan or tres leches, but astringent enough to clear and not to cloy the palate. It’s also a pretty tea, with cornflower petals and entire fruit slices, so it would make a nice gift for any lover of Earl Grey.

FINALLY, WE CLOSE WITH THE ULTIMATE OF THE
TRIO: JOHN WATSON TEA.

Watson gets short shrift when having products named for him, so I’m always glad to find a new item. In composition, this is similar to Teafling’s Sherlock Holmes Tea with its black tea, bergamot, and cornflower petals; however, the fragrance is less pronounced, more floral and less citrus. Its sweet bouquet is more a suggestion than a real presence. The flavour is milder too, with buttery mid-notes and a

cleaner finish. The sweetness, conveyed as much by smell as taste, is closer to honey than candy, and it is, like our Watson, a solid-yet-enjoyable choice. This is a wonderful writing tea, satisfying but not distracting, and I'm enjoying it now as I finish my review.

These Teafling Teas can be found at their Etsy shop* along with many other themed teas and accessories representing franchises such as Critical Role, ATLA, and Lord of the Rings.

Happy Sipping!

* <https://www.etsy.com/shop/TheTeafling>

STEEPED IN GUILT



KAREN ELLERY, JHWS “SHERRY”

“Watson, old fellow, so glad you could make it.” Unmoving, his back to the door where I stood, Holmes was still instantly aware of my arrival. Well, a highly-polished lacquer cabinet can be useful for more than storing herbs.

“When Mrs Hudson told me you were at Mr Kang’s shop and had asked for me, I came right away. My God, what has happened here?”

Several years earlier, in search of better tea than the stewed variety served by our well-meaning but unadventurous landlady, I ventured into this establishment—the only Chinese shop in Marylebone. Before I could formulate my request, there was a sudden cry from the young Asian man behind the counter, who had apparently cut his hand while trying to pry open a wooden crate. Fortunately, I had my medical bag with me and, after explaining I was a doctor, I was permitted to clean, stitch, and dress the wound. The shop owner, an older gentleman, introduced himself as Kang Jian Ying, or Mr

Kang, and his assistant as his son, Kang Huo Tu. He asked me what had brought me to his shop—besides providence—and when I had mentioned tea, his face lit up.

“So you appreciate fine tea?” he said.

“I have had little experience with *fine* tea, as my pension will not stretch to that, but I do enjoy *good* tea. At least, better than what my English landlady provides.”

Mr Kang chuckled and, watching intently as I stitched, added, “I believe I will be able to supply you with something you will find acceptable. Please, when you are finished, I hope you will join me to try a few of my teas that are rarely sought by your countrymen but are both fine and affordable.”

That was the beginning of my acquaintance with Mr Kang and his seemingly endless variety of tea. I never passed his shop without stopping in to purchase a few ounces, and there was always something new to sample.

In this very same room, I had learned the proper preparation for different types of tea as well as herbs used in Eastern medicine. Mr Kang was something of an apothecary, but he had found a better living in England selling more common commodities such as flour and soap. His was a quiet but prosperous trade, and he honoured me by calling me his “best English customer.” I certainly never expected to be called to his shop by an urgent message from Holmes.

While the room itself, situated to the rear of the shop and serving both as office and sitting room, was familiar to me, I was stunned by its present condition. Usually an oasis of calm and order, it was now as liberally splashed with blood as an abattoir. There were long smears on the floor, a bloody handprint on the tea table, and, most distressingly, the body of my friend, Kang Jian Ying, lying

lifeless in the centre of an irregular pool of darkening crimson.

"Murder, Watson. I have been asked by Scotland Yard to look into the matter. It seems one of the local constables, Robert Dinning, came in to speak to Mr Kang. He was given tea, and had just left the shop when he heard a cry from this back room. He says he ran in to find Kang dead on the floor in a puddle of blood with Kang's son kneeling by him holding a knife. The constable struggled with the boy for the weapon and cut his hand—more blood. Dinning's whistle brought reinforcements, and, once Lestrade arrived and saw what a mess it was, he called for me.

"Young Kang swears he's innocent and it must have been Dinning. Dinning, of course, says he'd have no reason to kill Kang, and that he was alive when he had left this room. I've been trying to sort out the blood trail, but you can see for yourself that the fight has smeared all the evidence. Certainly both men are covered in it. You know the victim and his household; can you suggest any reason for this crime?"

I thought carefully. "I know that he and his son have had some bitter arguments lately. Kang has not... had not," I swallowed hard with this correction, "confided in me beyond saying that his son is ambitious and wishes to start his own shop. Huo Tu is usually very quiet and respectful, but more than once in the last few months I have heard his voice raised to his father. It has been a cause of great tension between them.

"However, I believe Kang had another source of stress. Some months ago, he delicately asked if it was common in England for shopkeepers to pay local law enforcement for 'extra protection.' He had heard that certain gangs may try

extortion but was surprised that it might extend to police. Not that he has a high opinion of them in general, but he thought they would be better regulated. I assured him that it was neither common nor acceptable and that anyone requesting such a payment was in dereliction of their duty and should be reported. He responded in his often-cryptic way, ‘Ah, but who will bell the cat?’”

“So, either of our suspects might be lying; indeed, one of them must be. I will examine the room again. Will you talk to young Kang, Watson, and see if he tells you anything that seems unlikely or out of character?” Holmes glanced at me with a half-apologetic smile. “Knowing him, as I do not, your observations would be of great value.”

“Of course, Holmes. You know I am always glad to be of assistance.”

Holmes directed me to a door through which I had never before passed. It led further into the private quarters of the Kangs—specifically the kitchen. Seated at the table was Huo Tu. His hands and clothing were liberally stained with dried blood, and there was a smear on his cheek, as if a large hand had held him there. His head hung in uncomprehending grief, but raised quickly when he felt my hand on his shoulder.

“Huo Tu, you must tell me what has happened. Was there an argument?”

“Doctor Watson!” he exclaimed and clutched my coat. “You must help me. They will not believe me, and this one,” he gestured across the room, “lies and says that I have done this thing. It is impossible!”

Standing in the corner to which he gestured was Constable Dinning. Even against the dark blue of his uniform I could see stains from the fight, and one hand was wrapped in a bloody handkerchief. Two other officers

stood a little apart, listening to Inspector Lestrade but keeping an eye on the suspects.

"Well, Doctor, so you know the young... man here?" Something in his voice suggested that Lestrade's choice of noun may have hastily replaced something far less benevolent.

"Indeed I do, and Holmes has suggested that I speak with him and get a full sense of how things stand."

"A word in your ear, Doctor," Lestrade said softly as he drew me aside. "The neighbours are saying they've heard arguments, and Kang has no other heir. With him gone, the lad will be able to do what he likes with the place."

"Inspector, Huo Tu is a good and respectful son. I cannot imagine anything that would cause him to harm his father. Let me hear what he has to say."

"As you wish. Kang, you tell the doctor what you told me. Let's see if it comes out the same a second time."

Sometimes with eyes closed, sometimes looking at the floor, and sometimes meeting my gaze to emphasize his point, Kang Huo Tu gave his account.

"Ba—my father—and I were in the shop, waiting on Chin An-Xi—Mrs Chin. A very particular customer. That man—" his furious eyes flashed toward Dinning, "strolled in as though he owned the building."

Dinning snorted.

"He interrupted Mrs Chin most rudely," continued Huo Tu, "demanding to speak with my father alone. My father apologized to Mrs Chin and took the constable to his office. I finished wrapping up the parcels and saw the lady to the door. It had been at least ten minutes since *that man*," another hard glance at Dinning, "took my father away. At last he emerged, insolently striding across the shop, and said over his shoulder, 'I think your da wants you.' He was laughing as he walked out the door."

“We had no other customers, so I immediately went to the office, where I saw my father on the floor in a pool of blood, clutching his chest. I ran to hold him and knelt on something sharp. I had just picked it up to see what it was when I heard a voice from the doorway. It was the constable again, sneering at me, saying ‘You’re for it now, lad.’”

Dinning’s face reddened as the story progressed, but his hard smile never faltered.

“What an active imagination it ‘as, to be sure.” Dinning’s confident voice broke in. “The old man asked me back for a cuppa, and I agreed, to be friendly-like, though to be sure I don’t much care for the thin dishwater ‘e calls tea. We sat and jawed a bit while the kettle boiled, then ‘e made me wait whilst it steeped and we talked some more—took forever, it did. Said it ‘ad to be done proper-like. ‘e liked everything just so, and I’ve ‘eard ‘im arguin’ with ‘is son more’n once about ‘the virtues of patience,’ an’ all. Anyway, ‘e made to start another pot—foolish little things, them Chinese teapots. No spouts neither—but I couldn’t stop no longer, so I set off just as the kettle whistled.”

“The kettle whistled?” I asked sharply.

“Like I said. It distracted him enough so’s I could stand up and get going.”

“I see. One moment please.”

Huo Tu looked up, startled, as I left the room. Holmes was equally startled as I quickly picked my way over the bloody floor to the tea table in the office, where I had enjoyed so many cups and conversations with Kang Jian Ying. There were indeed two small cups and a gaiwan—a lidded tea vessel—there, indicating that Kang had served tea to a guest and had not had time to clear away. I lifted

the gaiwan and smelled the distinctive vegetal aroma of green tea.

"What is it, Watson? I can assure you, he died from a knife wound, not poison." The corner of Holmes' mouth quirked up, but his eyes were serious.

"It is green tea, Holmes!" I waited for his deduction, which did not come.

"Yes, the colour and aroma indicate that. The second cup shows that he did indeed serve tea to his guest, which suggests Kang was not frightened of the constable, and supports Dinning's statement."

"All the same, Dinning is lying, and this proves it. He swears that Kang boiled the kettle for the tea not once but twice, and the second time he used its whistle as a break in conversation to get away. Kang's kettle has no modern whistle, and Kang would no more boil water for green tea than he would oversteep it 'forever,' as Dinning claims he did."

"You're certain?" interjected Holmes.

"Certain that Dinning swore it, and certain that he lied. Green tea should be steeped with water no hotter than 185 degrees. Even I know that, and Kang was as much my master in the tea room as you are in a murder room. If Dinning is fabricating small details, he may well be fabricating the great ones. I believe he is a liar *and* a murderer, and I will do what I can to help you prove it."

"Indeed, old friend, I think you have come a fair way to doing so. Now we must convince Lestrade and Scotland Yard."

Subsequent interviews with other shopkeepers confirmed that Dinning had been running a protection racket in the neighbourhood. He was charged with extortion and murder; the judge was extraordinarily severe

with his case, stating Dinning had abused his position of trust to terrorize those he should have been protecting.

I am glad to say that Kang Huo To remains the proprietor of the Marylebone shop, as well as two others. Prosperous, but not alone, he heads a growing family. While I still enjoy the occasional cup of tea with him, I am no longer his best English customer; Holmes is.



Martin Freeman as Watson. *Art by Bluebell of Baker Street.*

THE USE OF MY DEAR (WATSON)
BY SHERLOCK HOLMES



G. BENJAMIN WHITE

As an applied linguist, I am interested in both the current uses of language and its changes over time.

FROM “DOCTOR” TO “WATSON”

One of the changes observed within the short stories of Sherlock Holmes is his use of the shortened “Doctor” and “Watson” when addressing Dr John H Watson. In the first two short stories, Holmes used “Doctor” and “Watson” equally; however, in the remaining ten stories from *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, he moved to using Watson almost exclusively.¹ This shows how Holmes grew closer to Dr Watson in a very short time, as “Doctor” is a far more formal form of address (Cooke 2010; Holmes 2008, 282).

“MY DEAR”

As I was investigating the use of “Doctor” and “Watson”, I came across an interesting word bundle: “My Dear”, followed by “Doctor”, “Watson”, or “Fellow”. While this

treatise examines the use of the bundle by Holmes, it is worth noting that Watson used this bundle first: “My dear Holmes, ... this is too much. You would certainly have been burned had you lived a few centuries ago.” (SCAN). Dr Watson had not seen Sherlock Holmes for a while (“I knew little of my former friend and companion”) and was still impressed that Holmes had deduced, by simply looking at his shoes, that he had a maid who was soon to lose her job (“my wife has given her notice”). It is not until REDH that Sherlock Holmes uses “My Dear”: “‘You could not possibly have come at a better time, **my dear** Watson,’ he said cordially.”

“MY DEAR” DEFINITION

Longman (2024) states that “my dear/darling/love etc.” is “used when talking or writing to someone that you love or like a lot.” Collins Dictionary (2024) discusses how in British English, “My Dear” is “used in conventional forms of address preceding a title or name.” This definition is shown in the uses of “My Dear” by Sherlock Holmes when addressing other characters, “Your hands, **my dear** sir.” (REDH), or when other characters are addressing him, “**MY DEAR MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES**” (SCAN). Here, however, I will focus on Sherlock Holmes’s use of “My Dear” when addressing Dr Watson, though I feel it is important to discuss Dr Watson’s use of the phrase as well.

“MY DEAR” IN SHERLOCK HOLMES

Of the 56 short stories, only 14 (25%) are missing a “My Dear” from Sherlock Holmes. In total, I found 103 “My Dear” bundles used by Holmes. The most used word by far after “My Dear” is “Watson” (75 times), followed by

“Fellow” (26 times), “Doctor” (1 time), and “Sir” (1 time). *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* contained the highest percentage of bundles found (40.78%), followed by *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (22.33%), *His Last Bow* (16.50%), *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (10.68%), and lastly *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (9.71%).

I find it interesting that *His Last Bow* had a higher percentage of the bundles than other books, given that there are only seven stories within. One possible reason is *His Last Bow* follows *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, which had by far the highest percentage of all the bundles—likely due to the change in their relationship after Sherlock Holmes returns from the dead.

The two books with the lowest percentages are the first and last of the short story collections. These are also the two books with the most stories missing a bundle.²

The lack of “My Dear” in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* may be accounted for as Arthur Conan Doyle was likely still working out his characterizations. For example, if we look at the number of foreign words and phrases used by Holmes in the early stories compared to the later ones, we see big differences. In the first five short stories alone, Holmes used 10 foreign words and phrases. When compared to five short stories from *His Last Bow*, only REDC had any foreign words or phrases (White, 2022).

By the end of *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, either due to Conan Doyle’s move toward spirituality or his weariness with the stories, the relationship between the two has again become more formal (Klinger 2005; Leal 2008).

The last use of “My Dear” by Holmes comes in RETI, when he tells Dr Watson, “I much fear, **my dear** Watson, that there is no return train to-night.” Interestingly, as Dr Watson was the first to use “My Dear” in the short stories, he is also the last...when he tells Sherlock Holmes, “**My**

dear Holmes, it is out of the question” (SHOS), emphasizing that there is no way that Sir Robert has killed his sister.

DEATH AND RETURN

In two stories, “My Dear” plays an important role. FINA (eight uses of “My Dear”) and EMPT (10 uses of “My Dear”) contain 17.48% of all the “My Dear” bundles used by Holmes, with 16 of these using “Watson” and two using “Fellow”. It is not surprising, given the nature of the stories. In FINA, Holmes was meant to die. In his final note to Dr Watson, and in no small part to the reader, he uses two “My Dear Watson”s and one “My Dear Fellow”. In EMPT, he is somewhat shocked by Dr Watson’s reaction to his return (“**My dear** Watson,’ said the well-remembered voice, ‘I owe you a thousand apologies, I had no idea that you would be so affected’”). It is at this point that Dr Watson, who has always admired Holmes, sees just how much Holmes values him as a friend and companion.

This use of “My Dear” by Holmes continues in every story in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* and five of the seven stories in *His Last Bow*. It is a little surprising that Holmes does not use a “My Dear” in LAST, given the nature of its ending. He does, however, say, ““Good old Watson! You are the one fixed point in a changing age,”” demonstrating the closeness of their relationship.

DYIN: “I”, “YOU” AND “WE”

Of the 56 short stories, DYIN perhaps best illustrates another aspect of language variation. As Holmes knows only Dr Watson can bring Mr Culverton Smith to 221B, he needs to impress upon his friend that he is dying. In this

story, Holmes frequently uses “I” (Sherlock Holmes) and “You” (Dr Watson), but does not often use “We” (both). This creates a linguistic expression of Holmes’s deception.

It is noteworthy that by this point in the Canon, Holmes has already begun to use “we” elsewhere, illustrating his bringing Watson fully into the cases and sharing in the rewards. He tells Watson in *LADY* that “the family are anxious, and, as they are exceedingly wealthy, no sum will be spared if **we** can clear the matter up.”

In addition to the changes in pronouns, there are other linguistic ways that Holmes presses the point that he is dying, such as his description of his “disease”, his uncharacteristically raised voice, and his incoherent babbling. First, he forces Watson to keep his distance, telling him that he has a deadly disease that even London doctors do not know of.³ Next, he yells at Watson, “You a doctor—you are enough to drive a patient into an asylum. Sit down, man, and let me have my rest!” Finally, he talks nonsense about coins and oysters. It is through his careful usage of words and tone that Holmes, as he must, convinces Watson of his impending death.

At the end of *DYIN*, we also see the return of “My Dear”, as Holmes presents Watson with the evidence of their deep and true friendship. After Culverton Smith has been arrested, we read: ““Good heavens!” cried Holmes. “I had totally forgotten him. **My dear** Watson, I owe you a thousand apologies.”” Then we see a very sincere Sherlock Holmes, showing how much he values Dr Watson: “Can you ask, **my dear** Watson? Do you imagine that I have no respect for your medical talents?”

MY DEAR BBC

Before I conclude, I would like to make one last observation regarding Sherlock Holmes's use of "My Dear". This comes from BBC Radio's pastiche, "The Abergavenny Murder" (Coules 2004). The story centers on a man who unexpectedly dies at 221B before he is able to tell his story. Sherlock Holmes (Clive Merrison) thinks the man may not have come to see him directly, but rather intended to see Dr Watson (Andrew Sachs). Watson does not believe him, telling Holmes that there are other doctors he could have consulted before coming to 221B. We then have the following dialogue:

"**My dear** doctor, you are altogether too modest. You have omitted your most significant characteristic."

"I have?"

"Watson, you're famous."

Holmes surmises that the client wanted Watson to write up his version of events to save him from the gallows. It is intriguing that Bert Coules chose to use "My Dear Doctor" in the script, given that Holmes had clearly moved away from using "Doctor" when addressing Watson in the short stories.

CONCLUSION

It is quite obvious that the relationship between Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson changed as the stories progressed. Cooke (2010) discussed how over the course of the stories, "Holmes...became more esteemed; he was more respectful towards Watson" (58). At the very beginning of the adventures, the two are roommates, saving money. By the

end, they had developed a deep friendship built on trust. The use of “My Dear” by Holmes is one way that shows how close the two men were. In addition, it is telling that the highest use of “My Dear” comes at both the time that Holmes believed the friendship was over due to his “death” and the time that he was able to restart the friendship after his return.



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1. Some of the information on the use of "I" (Sherlock Holmes), "You" (Dr Watson), "We" (Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson), Watson, and "Doctor" comes from data collected for an unpublished article.
 2. Stories missing a "My Dear" bundle: *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (five stories), *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (four stories), *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (three stories) and *His Last Bow* (two stories).
 3. As someone who lives in Taiwan (Formosa), I have always been curious about the "black Formosa corruption" (DYIN).

WATSON'S HOLIDAY



ALFREDO HAMILL, JHWS "ANSTRUTHER"

Holmes's lonely retirement to the Sussex downs to raise bees had represented quite a blow for me, after all the adventures we had had together. Of course I was still relatively busy with my practice, but lacking those calls from him to go together to solve some mysterious happening, my life seemed to have lost the special flavor. When I had ventured that we chase down Lowenstein of Prague to put an end to his trafficking in ape serum, he had only been willing to finance an investigation on my own. It had come to a rather inglorious and very embarrassing conclusion, putting an end to any attempt on my part to keep the old spirit alive without Holmes.

Seeing his unwillingness to leave his isolated life, I had made it a point to go and visit him on occasion, but rusticating in an isolated cottage, with little to do but watch Holmes care for his bees and study methods of improving his stock, had offered nothing of our previous association, and thus I never stayed beyond a few days, however much I then missed his company after I had gone.

Finally, I hit on the solution of inviting him for a holiday

abroad, since he had found an assistant who would care for his bees in his absence, hoping the stimulus of travel would move him to accept. He never showed any interest in that proposal either, until quite unexpectedly, and to my great amazement, he finally expressed an interest in taking a holiday in Switzerland. When I asked him how it was that he had changed his mind, he answered enigmatically, "Actually, I haven't, but there are circles in circles. I need you to go and see what can be done about solving a problem."

"Alone?" I exclaimed! "Why, aren't you coming, too? And what problem are you talking about?"

"No, if indeed anything can be done, and I'm not at all sure of that, I suspect it best that I not appear. But someone should go, and that leaves you as the only possible substitute."

I was disappointed, and not a little mystified, but I naturally suspected some investigation might be at the heart of this and that was more than sufficient motivation for me to retrieve the excitement of past years, whatever it might have involved. Of course there was the risk of another fiasco, as with my chase after Lowenstein, but now Holmes was sending me by choice, which made all the difference. As I should have expected, however, there were more than a few circles in question.

"I'm sure you remember Irene Norton, née Adler. Well, the fact is that she has a daughter who studies in Paris, but who has apparently taken it into her head to run off with a rich and presumably quite fascinating older man of, unfortunately, unsavory reputation. He may not be after any of her money, but it is likely that she will be tossed away as an old toy once he tires of her, and it would be best that she be weaned from him before such an end. Who knows what might come of it otherwise?"

From what unknowable sources he had acquired this information I could barely surmise.

"But shouldn't her mother or father be taking the matter in hand?" I interjected. "Who am I to interfere?"

"Unfortunately, her father died about ten years ago, from a fever while traveling in Egypt. Her mother is thinking of remarrying and this has created an unbridgeable rift between them. No, a third party is needed who can act more or less incognito."

"And exactly how do you suggest I go about this? I certainly hope you don't propose that I should try to seduce the girl myself!"

"Heavens no, Watson! Whatever your other qualities may be, as a lothario you would not be very credible. Your job shall simply be to give the girl to believe that her lover is actually just a professional jewel thief who is using her as a cover for his illicit business, and is not actually interested in her at all."

"But does the girl's mother know of this plan? Does she approve?"

"No, she knows nothing of this, and must know nothing, which is why I can't go and you must go in my place. There is a good chance you won't be recognized, and much depends on that."

"And just how shall I pin this blame on the man? Will it be my word against his?"

"No, no, Watson. I'm going to give you some jewels which you are going to make the girl believe this man has stolen, using her as a blind. Indeed, you will likely have to pretend to be the man's partner in crime. It may or may not work, but with a headstrong young girl logical arguments are useless, though a demonstration might have some effect. The girl is going to a hotel in the Swiss Alps

for the holidays, presumably to meet her lover, and it is there that you will need to intercept her."

"I can only wonder on the comfort of Swiss prisons, as it seems I will be running a good chance of visiting one!"

"Don't be so melodramatic, Watson. We have gone beyond the law at times, which never put you off before, and this time you're not going to truly commit any crime. The jewels are well accounted for, no need to worry about being accused of anything by the Swiss gendarmerie. You will only be pretending to the girl that you are a sort of assistant, but with a conscience. You will say that you just want her to know the truth about the person she is associating with and the danger she is running."

"A thief, or accomplice, with a conscience. I think they are to be found only in cheap novels, Holmes."

"Young women often believe the stories in those cheap novels, Watson. Don't underestimate yourself, either. Your honest face will be your best argument."

Indeed, less than a week later I found myself at the Hotel Edelweiss, with a sense of both excitement and foreboding. Anstruther had agreed to take on my practice during my absence, though rather chuffily, I thought, given that I had done him the same favor only a short time before. In turn, I decided to borrow his name as a pseudonym, as it was of course best to avoid giving my real name.

I had gone on this secret mission with a specific purpose, but the beauty of the winter scenery and the comfort of the hotel soon put a different flavor on everything. When I got to the hotel, the girl had not yet arrived, so I decided to take advantage of the free time to practise my ice skating on the rink behind the hotel and to take some skiing lessons with a local guide, not to mention a delightful sleigh ride through the forest, all of which

proved to be highly enjoyable pastimes. I realized that I had not had such a pleasant and relaxing holiday in a very long time, and it put me in a more positive attitude towards the whole affair.

Finally, just when I was beginning to wonder if I had not been sent on a wild goose chase, the girl and her paramour made their appearance. I recognized her immediately from a photograph Holmes had been able to provide before I left. I was surprised to find the man, roughly my age to my guess, to have a rather pleasant look about him, well-dressed and very well mannered, much like myself, and the girl, looking a few years older than I had expected, with vivid red hair and a captivating smile.

The two of them did take morning skiing lessons together, but for the rest I noticed that the man disappeared for much of the rest of the day, leaving me ample occasion to speak to the girl. I waited a full day, however, before casually approaching her as she watched the skaters on the rink from the hotel terrace. A few typical remarks about the various hotel guests down on the ice, the scenery and other such banal subjects served to create a conversational acquaintance, so that I could easily speak to her whenever we later chanced to meet.

On the third day I judged that it was time to act, and, finding her alone on the terrace one afternoon, I leaned on the balustrade near her and asked her about her companion. She was rather non-committal, with only vague expressions about him, much to my surprise. I had expected excitement or passion, while instead I sensed, if not indifference, then certainly nothing more than something resembling long-standing friendship. I could make no sense of it, and bluntly asked if they were a couple as they seemed, to which she replied quite ingenuously in the positive, perhaps to put me off if I

should turn out to be a seducer of young women. I was then at the point of putting on my little act as the man's accomplice in larceny, with all the accompanying warnings, when we noticed his return, so I cut the conversation short with a bow and took my leave. I saw them look in my direction as I left, but I put on as nonchalant an air as possible and disappeared into the hotel. I wondered how the man would comment on my presence, and I could see that the task was going to be more complex than even I had anticipated. I made a point of keeping my distance the next day, to allay any suspicion of my real intentions.

I again chose a moment when she was alone, watching the skaters on the rink with a wishful look in her eyes, perhaps wondering where her lover might be. I didn't say anything at first, to avoid any undue haste on my part, but I knew it was the right moment to act. I began with the usual mundane comments, but then I jumped into the game.

"I see you're often alone. I'm surprised your husband should prefer do things without you."

"Actually, he's not really my husband, yet. But he has to mind to his business even here, or so he says," she replied.

"And what business is that?" I ventured.

"He trades in jewels," was her reply.

"Like these?" I said, taking a small bauble from my pocket.

"Oh, are you in the same business?" she said with some surprise in her voice.

"In a way. Actually, I am his partner. I handle the jewels he wants to sell."

She stared at me for a moment before saying, "But until just now you have acted as if you didn't know him. What trick is this?" There was a definite tone of cold suspicion in her voice, as she looked me straight in the eyes.

"There is no trick. It's simply because nobody should know we are associated. Our, shall we say, partnership, is a secret from everybody, and so it must remain," I said in a very low voice, turning my head back and forth as if to see if anyone could be listening. I was almost amazed at my theatrical posing.

At this, I took all the jewels out of my pocket, pretending great circumspection, and said, "In fact, these are supposed to be for you, that is the story he has given out, but tomorrow they will simply disappear, never to be found again, a mystery with no explanation. You, my dear girl, serve only the purpose of being the person they will supposedly be given to as a gift. Of course, you will never see them. And you will have served your purpose."

"Who are you, and why are you telling me these things? And why should I believe this incredible story?" she exclaimed, standing back and looking at me with wide eyes.

"I am no one. Let us say I'm just a casual observer who wishes to avoid useless suffering, as has happened to others before you. You can believe me or not, as you wish. Certainly he will deny any accusation you may make, just as he will say he knows nothing of me, so you must take me at my word. I have chosen to speak only because I cannot stand by and see such an innocent creature as you become the victim of his egotism, even if this does perhaps put me in a difficult position. Ignore my words at your own risk. Fly for your life, and believe me I don't exaggerate."

I bowed at these words, putting a finger to my lips, to signify silence both now and later, and quickly turned. She stared at me as I walked briskly away, but I had the impression that she had believed my story, or at least that she was shaken in her certitudes. I was sure the man's certain insistence that he knew nothing of me would pass

off just as a way to keep any association between us a secret and consequently make me even more credible.

However much I regretted putting an end to my pleasant stay, I made a point of leaving the hotel early the very next morning, to keep faith with the supposed secrecy of my affairs, and because it was of course necessary to avoid any possible confrontation with the man, which might have had uncertain consequences. In any case, I was quite pleased with myself for having pulled off a none-too-easy deception.

Passing through Geneva, I telegraphed Holmes that all was well, and two days later I was back home in London. As soon as I was settled again, I wrote him a longer letter, recounting all that had gone on. I told him with satisfaction why I thought I had been successful, and that I was looking forward to hearing further news of the matter from him. His reply brought his congratulations, which I thought could have been more fulsome, and an invitation to go down and visit him, when I would have the occasion to tell him in person about all that had happened. I was pleased to think that this would be the first time something had managed to distract him from his bees. Having to repay my duties to Anstruther, who managed to have need of my help as soon as I was back in London, meant that I had to put off my visit to Holmes for over a week, but finally I managed to find a few days to go and see him.

He welcomed me with his usual warmth and sardonic wit.

"Ah, Watson, the returning hero! You lack only a triumphal march through the Forum! I've read and reread your fascinating account of your Swiss adventure."

I couldn't stifle a chuckle at the ridiculous simile, but I was also gratified by the implicit compliment. Certainly I felt that I had carried myself well in the circumstances.

When I handed back the jewels he had given me I felt quite like D'Artagnan giving the Queen of France the diamonds purloined by Lady De Winter in Dumas's novel.

"I must admit that I felt I was jumping into deep and dangerous waters when I left, but as it turned out, things went quite well."

"Indeed," added Holmes, "and you have lost your sickly London pallor in the bargain. I've never seen you more healthy and relaxed."

"I must admit that that has been an unexpected advantage. I would have gladly stayed there longer if the occasion had allowed it. It was quite a splendid little holiday. You would do well to accompany me on a return visit."

"Seeing how you return, I think that is a distinct possibility," Holmes replied, "but now let us sit down to some lunch, and you can tell me all about it in your own words. My housekeeper has prepared a little feast to celebrate your success."

We were just finishing some coffee after our rather sumptuous meal when I heard a dogcart approaching along the path to Holmes's cottage. "Are you expecting other guests?" I asked.

"Yes, I have asked some friends to join us. I think you will find them amusing."

Holmes went to the door to receive his guests as they arrived. When they entered, I was struck mute with silent astonishment. It was none other than the couple from the Hotel Edelweiss!

I stared at them and then towards Holmes, then back at them and then again at Holmes. I was so astounded, I could find no words to express my amazement. In turn they instead all smiled at me in the most friendly manner.

"Good God! What is the meaning of this, Holmes?" I finally managed to blurt out.

"Watson, I must confess what is perhaps now obvious, that I was not completely honest with you when I sent you off to Switzerland. First of all, though, allow me to introduce my cousin James Vernet and his daughter Rebecca."

I was still almost speechless, but I did manage to spit out the words, "Your cousins!"

"Yes, Watson, I can understand your surprise, but believe me, it was all intended for the best—your best to be specific."

"Holmes, whatever you may say were your intentions, I think I have been used most disgracefully. I can't believe a friend would do me such a trick."

"Watson, Watson, it was no trick, believe me. I could see very well how you were chafing for lack of our old investigations together, besides being in need of a holiday away from the cold grimness of London. I thought only to add the spice of adventure to what was to be essentially a health-restoring journey. Now tell me if I did not achieve my purpose, to revive both your body and your soul?"

There was of course nothing that I could object to this, as it had gone exactly as he said.

Holmes continued, "When you went off after Lowenstein, I had hoped that might prove to be a salutary substitute for what you felt you were missing, but unfortunately it did not go as expected, indeed quite the contrary, so I thought to create another occasion for you to dedicate your energies to solving a case. With the help of James and Rebecca, I was able to do just that, and I can see that both your health and mental outlook are all the better for it. You enjoyed your stay and had the satisfaction

of successfully carrying out your plan. Is that not the beneficial initiative of a real friend?"

I found I was still unable to express myself, even though these mitigating words had quite softened my feelings.

Holmes added further, "James and Rebecca have a home in Folkestone, and we see each other occasionally. She is an actress with the *Comedie Francaise*, and she agreed to play this little part as a personal favor to me. Her father went along to make the story more credible. The invented story about Irene Adler was necessary simply to create the tableau."

I was finally only able to say, "But I feel that I have been put in a ridiculous position, and played the fool."

Rebecca then spoke up. "Not at all, doctor, not at all. You put yourself to great trouble simply on the word of a friend, carrying out what could have been a rather risky affair. I quite respect you for that. It's true that we were playing roles, but you did not know that, and I think you acted magnificently. I might add that you also showed yourself to be quite good with your ice skating. Indeed, both I and my father hope to see you and Sherlock together at the Edelweiss in the future, without any subterfuge, however!"

It was difficult to continue feeling hurt after these words, however much I felt I had been tossed head over heels by these revelations.

Her father James then added, "We would be pleased to think that we have now added you as one of our friends."

I finally was able to say, "Well, the Lowenstein affair was actually much more of a farce than this, so perhaps I really have no cause to complain. At least this time, I was able to carry out what I want to do, at least in my head. And if it means that I shall now be able to pry Holmes

away from his bees occasionally, either up to London or to a holiday abroad, then, yes, it has been a wonderful success!"

THIS GREAT INTERNATIONAL AFFAIR [REIG]



ROB NUNN, JHWS "BEACON"

Over the years, there has been plenty of confusion over the title of the seventh case in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. Is it "The Reigate Squires", or should the word "Squires" be singular? And hasn't it also been listed as "The Reigate Puzzle"?

Turns out this is an international dispute.

According to D. Martin Dakin's entry for the story in *A Sherlock Holmes Commentary*:

"This first appeared in *The Strand* as *The Reigate Squire* (singular); but evidently soon after, this name struck Watson as inappropriate for the two men concerned, and in *The Memoirs* it was changed to *The Reigate Squires*. In the American editions it has usually been altered to *The Reigate Puzzle*: it is believed that the first American editors feared that the word 'Squires' would be offensive or even incomprehensible to the Sons of the Free."

A little too easy of an explanation.

In "The Greek Interpreter", Holmes famously told Watson that, "My ancestors were country squires, who appear to have led much the same life as is natural to their class." Why can Americans be expected to understand the word "squires" in this context but not when it is used in another story's title?

Dakin's theory has been taken for granted over the years, and, like countless other things in Sherlockiana, many of us have trusted the reasons given without question.

Only one page of the manuscript exists—and it isn't the title page—so we can't go to the source material for the answer. Delving a little deeper, an article from *Baker Street Miscellanea*, (Number 35, Autumn 1983) gives us some more information. Ann Byerly reports that Sidney Paget's account book from March 1893 says, "7 drawings S.H. (Reigate Puzzle)."

It seems odd that Paget would use the word "Puzzle", but many might brush away this wrinkle as Paget is connected with so many Sherlock Holmes stories. Surely his contact at *Harper's Weekly*, an American magazine, reported this title to him at some point?

But Paget didn't illustrate the American edition.

As with so many Sherlock Holmes stories published in *The Strand Magazine*, Sydney Paget illustrated the Reigate tale. But *Harper's Weekly* had commissioned W. H. Hyde to provide the two illustrations for this case. There is no connection between the British illustrator and the American title in this instance. So, why would Sydney Paget refer to this story as "The Reigate Puzzle"?

Byer posited in her article that Doyle originally titled the story "Puzzle", but, after sending his submission to America, changed his mind and changed the manuscript title to "Squire". Richard Lancelyn Green had the same

theory in his essay on the story in *The Baker Street Dozen* four years later. Lancelyn Green hypothesized that Doyle wrote to the editor of *The Strand* and requested the title be replaced.

Lancelyn Green also pointed out that there can only be one squire, as *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word "squire" as "one who is the chief land-owner, magistrate, or lawyer in a district." The plural edition would be incorrect usage.

So, if Sidney Paget was referring to this case as "The Reigate Puzzle" in 1893 ... and the word "Squires" is grammatically incorrect anyway... and there's no proof to back up D. Martin Dakin's theory that we've all gone along with... do you know what that means?

The American title is the right one, and the British version is incorrect.

USA! USA! USA!

People just want eachother y'know?
They just want community, that's it. It's the people they're
in it for, ultimately. If they need a special something
that binds them together, then that's okay...

Unless it's
Bristol Rovers



Bristol Rovers. Art by 4thelney0nes.

IN DEFENSE OF JOHN WATSON AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BESOTTED NARRATOR



ABRIL IÑIGUEZ

Every couple of years, the world as a collective likes to ruminate upon new adaptations of Sherlock Holmes stories—with every single one promising to be either “The Ultimate Adaptation” or “Holmes for the New Era”. It is understandable, given the amazement and awe we hold for the beloved mysteries; they are classics for a reason. Despite this status, however, time and again I see creators of TV shows, pastiches, and movies neglect the most important aspect of every single Sherlock Holmes story: the immovable presence of Dr John Watson.

Some even go as far as turning Watson into a villain, a caricature of himself, or even erasing him completely from the narrative. “After all,” they seem to say, “the important one is Holmes, isn’t he? He is the genius and Watson is just his biographer!”

This capital omission when it comes to adaptations ignores the vital part that Watson plays in Holmes’ life. Watson is the companion, the bridge between the “normal” world and the genius that is Holmes’ deductive brain. He is the translator between the leaps in judgment

and reasoning Holmes' brilliant mind comes up with and the layman's language.

There is a reason why we readers come up with the idea that Holmes is smart beyond his quirks and his drug addiction, beyond his ignorance of anything and everything that (in his opinion) doesn't help him solve the cases which distract him from the boredom of normal life...and that reason is that John Watson is the person narrating the whole thing. We are not introduced to Holmes through an omnipresent, anonymous narrator—as is the case in most other books. We are thrown in the middle of a mystery from the start, in the same way Watson is unexpectedly thrown into 221b.

What we think of Holmes, what we feel for him... it is all because Watson wishes us to experience this. The adventures carry within them one of the best storytelling devices, graciously blended into the narrative: that Watson is an incredibly good writer. So much so that the public gazes into the spotlight where Holmes stands and, in most cases, ignores the fact that the one shining it down is Watson himself.

Creators who like to ignore Watson and his function in the narrative tend to see Holmes as their own self-insert: a super-smart man whose genius cannot compare with the mediocre populace, one who can barely tolerate their stupidity...basically a gift to men from God and he must to be worshiped for it. The reality is that every single thing we perceive from Holmes is because of how Watson sees him. Watson is our unreliable narrator; his descriptions and impressions of Holmes are the ones that are weaved into the story. The text even goes so far as to give us a glimpse of Holmes' opinion on this, as the consulting detective sometimes accuses Watson of adding too many embellishments. If we see Holmes as an incredible genius,

as someone whose intelligence is far above that of the rest of the world, it is because Watson says so. With every passing story, we come across characters whose first impression of Holmes has been influenced by what they themselves have read in Watson's prose. These in-universe characters fall under the same influence that we, as readers, do.

John Watson's love for Holmes is one of the main plot points in the story. We see its evolution the same way as one going through different stages of falling in love. In the beginning, we see Watson's first infatuation, his interest in what makes Holmes what he is. This initially superficial view deepens with every subsequent story. We see them have their misunderstandings which, most of the time, end up in a deeper appreciation of Holmes as a person.

This all culminates in the incredible rendition of "The Final Problem", which could be seen, without the smallest effort, as Holmes planning his own death. By what means we are never completely certain, since we can only see it through the lens of Watson's deep grief after the fact—a testament to both his feelings and the great esteem in which he held Holmes as a person. While it is true that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's purpose was to end Sherlock Holmes' adventures with the short story, there is no doubt in reading that the focus of the narrative is on Holmes spending his last moments with Watson.

The subsequent creation of "The Empty House", and the adventures which follow, partially diluted the importance of the whole ordeal, but it also gave us insight as to Holmes and Watson's relationship. In that light, we readers can witness its evolution, as well as the toll that Holmes' fake death had on both his biographer and his own author, adding complexity through the strain of the façade.

E. W. Hornung created one of my favorite homages to Holmes and Watson in his *Gentleman Thief* series, and put a greater emphasis on the tense relationship between the two characters after a fake death. He gave his besotted narrator an additional source of turmoil, though: while A. J. Raffles (our stand-in Holmes) was away living life and even having a romantic interest, Bunny (his Watson) ends up falling into disgrace after being sent to jail for the crimes committed by them both.

The Raffles stories lean into the importance of the unreliable, uselessly-enamored narrator. Hornung didn't shy away from having Bunny refer to Raffles as handsome and attractive in several instances, along with the admiration and bewilderment the biographer expressed towards his subject.

There is a tacit understanding that, beyond the differences between Raffles and Bunny and Holmes and Watson in both their line of work and their temperaments, the nature of the connection linking both pairs is the same. Hornung understood both that there is no Holmes without a Watson to appreciate him and how their dynamic is the fuel behind the success of the series. And, ultimately, that it is impossible to have a good story without a good storyteller.

THE CASE OF THE MACAO PEARLS



DR. JOHN H. WATSON, JHWS “TEDDY”

On a bitterly cold morning in January, Sherlock Holmes and I sat, as was our usual habit, one on either side of the fire, smoking our after-breakfast pipes. His was of the finest tobacco (procured from the slipper on the mantle), perhaps subtly hinting that he found my usual ‘ship’s’ to have a rather pungent aroma. I had developed a taste for ‘ship’s’ aboard the *Orontes* on my voyage home from the Crimea. This was a different blend, which also had quite some presence of Latakia and Perique. I had purchased it earlier when we happened to be passing Robert Lewis Tobacconists at 19 St. James Street, though it did not particularly please Holmes.

We had just started our usual perusal of our newly-delivered “Daily Telegraph” with the intention of finding an interesting case in the agony columns within.

Holmes, due to his view overlooking the street, remarked, “Unless I am mistaken, I believe Inspector Lestrade is about to pay us a visit. He is heading our way and presently gazing toward our window with a determined look upon his face.” Within a few minutes, Mrs

Hudson was knocking on our door, accompanied by the aforementioned Inspector, still bearing the same expression. I had seen this look on the Inspector before in cases of difficulty.

After a perfunctory greeting, Lestrade immediately launched into a *précis* of his problem. Apparently, a crime of larceny of property had occurred involving a very wealthy and very influential merchant. There was seemingly no way for the perpetrator to have gained access to the scene of the crime. Inspector Lestrade was under duress by his superior to solve this mystery with all due haste.

Mr Holmes spoke aloud to both the Inspector and myself, as though he were simply musing. "It seems to be an occurrence which is happening more frequently lately."

Holmes asked Lestrade, "When did this happen?", to which Lestrade replied, "It was just discovered this morning."

"Time is of the essence!", said Holmes, turning toward me. "Come Watson, we must go immediately to discover the facts of this case."

"I have a four-wheeler waiting," said Lestrade. We can be there in fifteen minutes. I shall persuade Constable Jones not to spare the horses."

On the way to the crime scene, Lestrade apprised us of the details of the case. "Mister Hugh McCauliff, perhaps the richest and most influential jeweler in the city, was expecting a shipment containing a necklace of extremely large pearls from Macao aboard the ship *Orient Queen* which had docked at the Port of London yesterday afternoon. The pearls are priceless— not only because of their size, but also the fact that, despite their size, they are perfectly matched. Unfortunately, when the pearls were uncased this morning, they were worthless pebbles,"

continued Lestrade. "They had been in the ship's safe inside a strong room, guarded by one of the Masters-at-Arms for the entire voyage. The Ship's Master assured us that the pearls were observed being locked away at the beginning of the voyage and were given to Mr McCauliff's Secretary at the dock upon arrival."

True to his word, we reached the estate of Mister Hugh McCauliff within the promised time.

"Ah, here we are," said Lestrade, pointing to a property coming into view on the right. It was a three-story stone house with a brass plaque on the surrounding brick fence declaring it to be Grosvener House. The house was of the style known as Greek revival, having Corinthian style columns supporting a balcony below the roof of the portico. It had a straight drive which went past the house, but there was a turning before the main entrance for carriages. The drive was lined with alternating boxwoods and arborvitae.

Upon a knock from Inspector Lestrade, the front door was immediately opened by the butler, Mr Cheevers, who invited us into the morning room. "Mr McCauliff will be here very presently," he said.

Mister Hugh McCauliff was a heavily-built man, fourteen stone in weight, approximately sixty years of age, and he wore a dark blue single-breasted suit with a dark yellow vest and a light yellow four-in-hand tie.

He was accompanied by Mr James Moore, Detective. Detective Moore was clad in the typical blue suit often worn by policemen.

After all parties were introduced, Detective Moore was the first to speak, exclaiming, "Mr Holmes, I am very glad to see you! Your reputation has preceded you."

"Let us go see the scene of the crime," said Holmes.

We were escorted to Mr McCauliff's office on the

second floor and were shown a desk made of heavy maple with locking drawers. Mr McCauliff informed us that he had locked the pearls in the center desk drawer the past evening with the intention of taking them to his bank this morning.

Holmes asked, "Has anyone been in the room since?"

"No, I have the only key. Even my secretary, Mr Charles Simon, who has been with me for twenty years, does not have one," he assured us.

"How many servants do you have?" asked Holmes.

"Only a cook who also serves as housekeeper, and the butler, James, who also assists, as there is so little for either of them to do."

Holmes dropped to his knees and began to closely examine the carpet near the desk with his glass. Presently, he stood and asked, "Watson, have there been any fast ships docked in London in the past week?"

I was much taken aback by this seemingly irrelevant question, but knowing Holmes as I do, I realized he must have a reason for the query. I remembered having seen that the *Cutty Sark* had docked a few days earlier on a voyage from the Orient for the tea trade. I informed Holmes of the fact, and I was rewarded with an exclamation of, "Aha, I thought that might be the case!" Holmes continued. "I observe a few very small fragments, barely larger than dust, of either pearl or mother-of-pearl upon the carpet...where they might be expected if someone had trod near the desk with residue on their shoes. Or more probably, slippers—such as those worn by Orientals—which would hold that type of debris longer. I asked the question regarding any ship which may have overtaken the Orient Queen on the way from Macau. We can reasonably expect both ships would have traversed the recently-improved Suez Canal, but that leaves a great deal of ocean upon which for a

speedy clipper ship to overhaul even a well-founded freighter such as the *Queen*."

Crossing to the window of the room at the front of the house, Holmes opened it and inquired of Mr McCauliff, "Is this window always unlocked?"

McCauliff answered, "Yes, I see no need to lock it since there is no access to this floor from the outside."

"Quite possibly that is inaccurate," replied Holmes.

Once again, Holmes took out his glass and closely inspected the windowsill and surround. He then asked Mr McCauliff, "Do you have a ladder that will comfortably reach the balcony outside this window?"

"Of course," he replied. "I will send the butler for it immediately."

Upon the return of James, Holmes hastily climbed to the rail of the balcony and once again produced his glass for a close inspection. After climbing down the ladder, Holmes said, "Someone has used a rope to climb the column and gain entry to the office. Since the window was unlocked, it could have been done silently." Holmes then gestured toward the desk. "I also saw evidence of picks used on the lock of the drawer. They are very small, and would not have been seen by anyone without a glass."

Turning to Inspector Lestrade, Holmes asked, "Inspector, will you devote some of the resources of the Yard to find out who made the passage on the *Cutty Sark* and where they are now?" We are in particular looking for an Oriental who might have been working in the pearl or mother-of-pearl trade."

"The only person with the resources to 'fence' or resell pearls of that size and quality would probably be my old nemesis, Professor Moriarty," Holmes avowed. "Watson, as you know, I try to always be apprised of Moriarty's whereabouts. I last heard he was in Hong

Kong, which is separated by only 35 nautical miles from Macau. It is quite possible that he arrived aboard the clipper ship Cutty Sark, but even more likely that he sent one of his upper echelon henchmen to perform the theft. It is further probable that Moriarty could have had Grosvenor House under observation for quite some time after discovering word of the sale of those valuable pearls in the Orient. Come, Watson, let us go speak to the Master of the Cutty Sark before it sails again," Holmes urged.

Once again, Inspector Lestrade provided a four-wheeler for the trip to the quay where the Sark was moored.

Upon arriving, Lestrade informed the captain that Holmes needed to ask some questions of him.

Holmes began, "Do you allow passengers on voyages?"

The answer was, "No, it is forbidden by the owners."

Holmes continued, "Then do you have any new hands on board?"

This time the answer was, "Only two. A Chinaman named Wo Lu and a Portuguese Able-Bodied-Seaman named Alfonso Silva."

"And what duties do those men perform?" Holmes queried.

"Silva is a general seaman with unspecified duties typical of a deck-hand, and Wo was signed on as a cook, but when I saw how well he climbed, I assigned him to the topsails," replied the captain.

"Do you think Wo is capable of climbing a rope to a height of thirty feet?" pressed Holmes.

"Without a doubt," replied the captain.

"Are you due to go back to the Orient from here?" asked Lestrade.

"Yes, on the morning tide." was the reply.

"You may not have a topsail specialist to sign for the return voyage," said Lestrade.

"Inspector, will you station some men aboard and on the quay to arrest Wo Lu immediately when he arrives for the return voyage?" asked Holmes. "And have your men be very careful. If they are spotted, Wo Lu will undoubtedly try to escape—perhaps by fleeing or perhaps by jumping into the Thames."

Lestrade was well-rewarded by that strategy when Wo Lu was apprehended at the gangplank later that evening. He was searched, found to be carrying a packet of extremely valuable pearls secreted in his clothes, and taken to Scotland Yard.

Holmes and I were summoned to the Yard. "Mr Holmes, what was your reasoning in solving this case with so little to go on?" asked Lestrade.

Holmes explained. "The culprit was undoubtedly an Oriental due to his being in the pearl or shell trade and further due to his knowing when and where the pearls were to be shipped to London. The fact that the strong-room on the *Orient Queen* had been guarded for the entire duration of the voyage, which is easily confirmed in any waterfront bar, certainly pointed to the valuable nature of an item of consignment. Wo Lu would not have worn slippers on board the *Cutty Sark* for fear of ruining them with water, and so the slippers would retain the pearl or shell residue," Holmes explained. "Only Professor Moriarty would have the resources to 'fence' anything of that value and he would have sent a trusted associate to steal the pearls. Moriarty would have gained knowledge of where the pearls would be kept and so would have chosen an accomplished climber, able to scale the column of the balcony. Lastly," Holmes went on, "once Moriarty was assured the pearls were aboard the *Queen*, he only had to

arrange that his accomplice arrived in time to intercept the pearl shipment before they were deposited in the bank."

Later that evening as we strolled the Strand, each smoking a very good Trichinopoly cigar from Fern, Thompson and Company, and satisfied that we had prevented a great loss by a Member of the House of Commons, I remarked, "I say, Holmes, I am amazed that you were able to solve that case from apparently so little. Solving a case by observation of a few grains of shell on a carpet and a nearly invisible rope mark on a balcony rail with deductions made from those miniscule clues is certainly remarkable!"

REVIEW OF WHEN THE ROSE
SPEAKS ITS NAME: A SHERLOCK
HOLMES ANTHOLOGY



AUSTIN SHAY, JHWS “JAY”

The literary anthology *When the Rose Speaks Its Name* reimagines Sherlock Holmes through a diverse collection of stories that blend traditional and contemporary reinterpretations. It honors the essence of Holmes and Watson but dares to push beyond the familiar, addressing themes of gender identity, personal struggle, and the evolution of justice. While the collection as a whole is impressive, certain stories stand out, meriting detailed exploration.

One of the most intriguing pieces is “Reigate Redactions,” a fresh take on “The Adventure of the Reigate Squires”. This story delves into the theme of censorship and the tension between personal memory and historical record. Holmes is faced with the challenge of solving a mystery where critical information has been deliberately withheld. The story cleverly plays with the idea of redaction—both in the literal sense of documents being altered and in Holmes' own perception of events. This story doesn't just offer a thrilling mystery but also a

commentary on truth, the way stories are told, and who controls those narratives.

In "Untitled," the reader is presented with an emotionally-charged tale that leaves much unsaid yet profoundly felt. This story artfully explores Holmes and Watson's relationship through an almost minimalist narrative that strips away external action to focus on their emotional and psychological dynamics. The use of silence and what remains unsaid between the two characters creates a tension that resonates long after the story ends. It's a delicate piece that succeeds in portraying deep intimacy without overt expression, emphasizing the unspoken bond that defines their partnership.

"The Not-Quite Date" offers a lighter, yet still introspective, exploration of Watson's feelings towards Holmes. The story revolves around a dinner Watson had planned for the two of them, only to find that Holmes is preoccupied with a case. What could have been a straightforward moment of disappointment becomes an exploration of Watson's inner life, particularly his longing for companionship and the quiet, unspoken love he harbors for Holmes. The piece deftly balances light-hearted moments with emotional depth, allowing readers to see a more vulnerable side of Watson while maintaining the sharp dialogue that characterizes the Holmes universe.

"Could Have" is one of the most philosophical stories in the collection, presenting a world of possibilities and missed opportunities. The narrative explores Holmes and Watson's lives through the lens of alternate realities, suggesting what might have been if different choices had been made. This story stands out for its thought-provoking approach, asking readers to reflect not only on the characters' decisions but on their own. By offering glimpses of different paths Holmes and Watson could have taken,

the piece deepens the complexity of their bond, leaving readers contemplating the delicate balance between fate and choice.

Finally, “Fallen” presents one of the darkest and most emotionally complex entries in the anthology. Here, the focus is on Holmes’ mental health, particularly the toll his work has taken on him. The story presents a deeply introspective Holmes, grappling with feelings of failure and doubt after a case that didn’t go as planned. Rather than focusing on solving a mystery, “Fallen” explores Holmes’ internal world, offering readers an intimate look at his struggles with depression. It is a powerful story that strips away the detective’s famed detachment to reveal his humanity. This portrayal of Holmes’ vulnerability makes the story one of the most emotionally resonant in the collection, as it suggests that even the greatest minds are not immune to self-doubt and despair.

Together, these stories showcase the diversity and emotional depth of the anthology. They explore a wide range of tones, from philosophical musings to deeply personal reflections, and from light-hearted moments to dark introspections. The variety ensures that *When the Rose Speaks Its Name* has something to offer every reader, whether they’re looking for action-packed mysteries or quiet, contemplative character studies.

The anthology’s commitment to inclusivity and diversity enhances the reimagining of these familiar characters, allowing for new interpretations and fresh insights. The collection not only pays tribute to Conan Doyle’s works but pushes the boundaries of what a Sherlock Holmes story can be, challenging long-standing perceptions of gender, identity, and the nature of relationships.

For long-time Sherlock Holmes fans, *When the Rose*

Speaks Its Name offers the opportunity to revisit beloved characters with new depth and meaning. For newcomers, the anthology serves as a compelling introduction, showing the timeless relevance of the detective’s world while expanding the boundaries of what it can explore.

To obtain a copy of *When the Rose Speaks Its Name*, visit the anthology website (<https://whentherosespeaks.com/book>) or Shield & Crescent Press. Digital versions are available through the anthology website and Amazon’s Kindle store. You may also find the anthology at your local independent bookstore or library.

Readers of *The Watsonian* receive 10% off the ebook (PDF and EPub formats bundle) at <https://payhip.com/whentherosespeaks> using code: WATSONIAN-10

NOT LABELLED FOR INDIVIDUAL
SALE



RITA SMITH, JHWS “PEARL”

Let us play a little game. I will provide you, dear reader, with a list of words while you time yourself to see how quickly you can complete the pairings.

I'll even get you started:

- Peanut butter and jelly

Now you try:

- Macaroni and _____
- _____ and paper
- Gin and _____
- Soap and _____
- _____ and pepper
- Bangers and _____
- Fish fingers and—oops! Wrong fandom!
- Holmes and _____

How did you do? Less than a minute? Less than thirty seconds?

(It’s cheese, pen, tonic, water, salt, mash, custard, and Watson, by the way... if you are the type who likes to check their answers.)

Some things simply belong together.

When the CBS television series *Watson*—currently filming in British Columbia and expected to premiere in January of 2025—was announced, I (like many Sherlockians) was sceptical. The show, pitched as a “medical drama with detective elements,” is set a year after Holmes’s death. Dr Watson leads a clinic for rare and unusual diseases in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Familiar names sprinkled throughout include Mary Morstan, Shinwell Johnson, and James Moriarty. There is, of course, one vital character missing: Sherlock Holmes. (‘Well, of course he’s missing!’, I hear you say, ‘He’s dead.’ The Great Hiatus, and all that.)

But is it a hiatus? Will Sherlock return? One wonders if, as in “Moonlighting” in the 1980s, unresolved yearning will be the leitmotif of the show. Will John Watson, as played by Morris Chestnut, be shown grieving for his lost friend? Will his Watson stoically avoid any mention of the Great Detective, or will his eyes glisten with tears when the veil of toxic masculinity is pulled aside? These questions cannot be answered until the series premieres, but I know I am not the only one asking them.

I do not stand alone in my belief that an entire television series about John Watson, MD without Sherlock Holmes is simply a bad idea. We have had adaptations without *Watson*, of course. Andy Lane’s *Young Sherlock Holmes* novels and the Guy Ritchie-led Amazon Prime series based upon them immediately come to mind. That series, still in production, will star Hero Fiennes Tiffin as a university-bound Holmes. Andy Lane has stated that his stories lack a John Watson because he wanted to stay

within the canonical world, where they meet in *A Study in Scarlet*.

The question I asked myself, and which I hope to answer here, is ‘Why?’ Why am I convinced that an adaptation about Watson with no hope of being joined by Holmes over the course of its run is doomed to failure? As is my wont, I burrowed down such rabbit holes as the hero/sidekick relationship and Jung’s everyman archetype. I discovered many interesting facts, but I did not find my explanation. It wasn’t until I turned toward the natural world and ties between disparate organisms that I found my answer.

The relationship between Sherlock Holmes and John Watson is best described as *symbiotic*. German mycologist Heinrich Anton de Bary defined symbiosis as “the living together of unlike organisms.” Surely we can all agree that the famed residents of Baker Street are not alike. Watson describes Holmes as a consummate logician with a precise and balanced mind who eschews sentiment and raw emotion. He is tall and lean, but strong, with a hawk-like nose and piercing grey eyes. We do not have the luxury of an outside observer within the Canon to describe Watson, but from his writings we can surmise he is an intelligent and curious man with a taste for adventure, who is also content to spend an evening smoking by the fire. According to Doyle and Paget, he is a middle-sized, strongly built man with a square jaw, a thick neck, and a moustache. Holmes mentions that Watson has a way with women—owing to his “natural advantages.”

Tall vs average (perhaps even short), thin vs well-built, stoic vs romantic, a quick and brittle intelligence set alongside one drawn to medical service and the military. The non-conformist and the conformist. Yes, Holmes and

Watson are not at all alike. And yet they create a perfect pair.

There are four main types of symbiosis: mutualism, commensalism, parasitism, and competition. Most of us are familiar with the more harmful varieties of parasitism and competition, and we can agree those are not relevant to our discussion. Commensalism occurs when a symbiont lives on a host and neither benefits nor harms that host (eg: a barnacle living on a whale). We can also agree that Holmes and Watson do not share a commensal relationship.

Their relationship can best be described as mutual—where both parties benefit.

When we first meet Dr John H. Watson, he is an army surgeon invalided home after serving in an armed conflict. This is retained in many adaptations, including both BBC’s “Sherlock” and Goalhanger’s podcast “Sherlock & Co”. In Doyle’s *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson is leading, in his own words, “a comfortless, meaningless existence” with neither “kith nor kin” to “break the monotony of daily existence.” He is intrigued by his new flatmate and spends hours seeking to understand Holmes. Within paragraphs, Watson’s malaise is all but forgotten, as he gallivants around the city with Holmes...service revolver at the ready. By the end of the novel, Watson has begun recording Holmes’s adventures for the public. Their relationship provides Watson with a home, a companion, and a purpose beyond his stalled medical career.

But what does Holmes gain? He has already established himself as a consulting detective, and has cultivated relationships with two detectives from Scotland Yard and his band of Irregulars who are his eyes and ears across London. What could he possibly need from Watson?

We don’t have to read very far in *STUD* to discover

that Holmes is “as sensitive to flattery on the score of his art as any girl could be of her beauty.” He thrives on Watson’s wonder at his deductive abilities. In fact, by the end of the novel Watson’s chronicle of Holmes’s adventures is poised to bring both fame and traffic to 221b Baker Street.

Olivia Rutigliano, a writer at the *Crime Reads* website, notes that, “The true genius of the Holmes-Watson gambit lies in their very collaboration, their scheme of presentation which is apparently so effective that it gets “Watson’s” stories published in *The Strand*, and, within the worlds of the stories as well as outside them, made Holmes so extraordinarily famous.” She sees Watson functioning as Holmes’s manager. “The thing is, Holmes is much less impressive without Watson there to tell you just how impressive he is. If Holmes is so impressive, it’s because Watson has set him up to be.”¹ A mutually beneficial symbiosis indeed.

Symbiosis can be further divided into *obligatory* and *facultative*—where obligatory is often mandatory for survival while facultative is not. I posit that Holmes and Watson have a mutual obligate symbiotic relationship. Mutualistic symbiosis, as described above, is a reciprocal altruism where both parties benefit from the relationship. In obligatory symbiosis, one or both organisms depend on the other for survival. A well-known example of an obligate mutual symbiotic relationship is the ocellaris clownfish and the Ritteri sea anemone. As everyone who has ever seen *Finding Nemo* knows, clownfish live within the stinging tentacles of the sea anemone which protect them from predators, while the clownfish clean the anemones of parasites and provide a source of nitrogen for growth and regeneration. Another example of an obligatory mutual symbiosis is the relationship between goby (a small to

medium-sized ray-finned fish) and burrowing shrimp. These flatmates share the burrow dug by the nearly blind shrimp who is protected by the sharper-eyed goby.

Can symbionts in such a relationship live apart? The short answer: yes. And yet, in *aposymbiosis* (the state of symbiotic organisms living apart from one another), the life cycles of both symbionts are affected. As one might imagine, for obligate symbionts the effects of separation may be drastic. Let us look at our hypothetical symbionts, Watson and Holmes. In “The Final Problem”, Watson notes that the loss of Holmes, “has created a void in my life which the lapse of two years has done little to fill.” By “The Adventure of the Empty House”, Watson is a widower who tries to fill that void with a private medical practice and an intense, if unofficial, interest in any crimes reported in the newspapers. The first few paragraphs of the story, despite the hint of a thrill to come, are melancholy. It is easy to imagine a man forever diminished by the loss of his friend. Of course, one has only to read a little farther to find Holmes, miraculously alive and healthy enough to assume a disguise that fools the good doctor not once, but twice. However, Watson notes that, “Holmes looked even thinner and keener than of old, but there was a dead-white tinge in his aquiline face which told me that his life recently had not been a healthy one.” Holmes, well-known for his casual attitude towards self-care, has also suffered for want of his companion.

I believe that neither party is unaware of the necessity of their relationship. Holmes calls Watson both a “conductor of light” (HOUN) and “one fixed point in a changing age” (LAST). Throughout the Canon, Holmes asks Watson to accompany him on his adventures, noting that his presence—not simply his assistance—is both needed and wanted. Twice, when confronted with the loss

of his friend, Holmes is bereft. The first time, Watson is simply moving out of their shared flat to get married. Facing the prospect of life alone on Baker Street, Holmes reaches for his cocaine bottle. Without his light, his lodestone, and his ready companion, he is left only with chemical stimulation. Much later, during “The Adventure of the Three Garridebs”, Watson is wounded. Holmes strikes the perpetrator as much in anger as to protect the doctor, exclaiming that, “By the Lord, it is as well for you. If you had killed Watson, you would not have got out of this room alive.”

Watson, for his part, notes that it was actually worth being shot in order “to know the depth of loyalty and love which lay beyond that cold mask.” He not only holds Holmes in great esteem, referring to him as the “best and wisest man” he has ever known (FINA), he also cares for the detective to the point of holding himself responsible for Holmes’s well-being—acting as his personal physician. “Remember that I speak not only as one comrade to another, but as a medical man to one for whose constitution he is to some extent answerable,” he states (SIGN).

In the United States, it is common to find food items marked “not labelled for individual sale,” as part of the Nutrition Labelling and Education Act prohibiting the retail sale of items without the proper nutritional and allergen information. One cannot simply break apart a multi pack of individually wrapped granola bars or candy and sell them as such without risking legal ramifications. Interestingly, while such labelling is required in the United Kingdom, there is no legal force to prohibit a retailer from selling such items. And so, 2025 will bring us a character—British in origin but transported to contemporary Pennsylvania—sold to us lacking the full package.

Is it legal? Of course it is.

Is it a wise choice? That remains to be seen.

John Trumbull, from the *Atomic Junk Shop* website, writes, “The point is that Holmes & Watson are a double act, and neither one of them is quite as interesting without the other. Without Watson, Sherlock Holmes becomes an insufferable know-it-all. Without Holmes, Watson becomes a rather dull general practitioner. It’s a delicate partnership, and just like with Astaire & Rogers, if one partner is out of step, it becomes a mess.”²

Will “Watson” be a mess? If I had a crystal ball or the gift of divination, I could share the answer with you. But since I am not, in the words of Harry Houdini, a fraud, a mental degenerate, or a deliberate cheat...we must wait until 2025 to see what this new Holmes-less adaptation will bring to the decades-long list of Watson reincarnations.

As for myself... I remain skeptical.

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1. Rutigliano, Olivia. 2021. “Redemption for Doctor Watson”. *Crime Reads*. October 29, 2021. <<https://crimereads.com/redemption-for-doctor-watson/>>
 2. Trumbull, John. 2017. “Sherlock Holmes and the Watson Problem”. *Atomic Junk Shop*. January 24, 2017. <<https://atomicjunkshop.com/sherlock-holmes-watson-problem>>

LONDON VICE



SHAI PORTER, JHWS “EVIDENTLY
HARMLESS”

“Let’s go, Sherlock,” John said, handsomely. Sherlock tossed the keys for the Winchester Blue Aston Martin Volare to John, who caught them effortlessly in his capable, and not in any way incompetent, left hand. Sherlock knew this was the car he preferred out of all the ones in his collection, as it matched the radio star’s penetrating eyes. A shame that the day was *too* perfectly sunny (a rarity) *not* to have the top down and sport his Oakleys. He would need to drive a bit slower, so they wouldn’t fly off.

It was also a shame that his adoring fans would never see just how handsome he was, though his voice was almost equally appealing.

Almost.

John, ever respectful of the classics, had purchased his first Aston in Racing Green. The fact that it matched the eyes of Mariana (code-name: M), his Everything Gal and liaison to the...well, to his *other*, lesser-known profession... was just a coincidence, but coincidence always seemed to work in John’s favour. Yes, God would move mountains to

meet the casual whims of Dr John H. Watson, MD: doctor, soldier, broadcast personality, MI5 secret agent.

Shhhh. I didn't tell you that last bit.

He was a mild-mannered R4 newsradio man on Thursdays... but on the other days of the week an entirely different John emerged.

His carefully-crafted, affable image was sometimes rather difficult to maintain (the British Press loved to mock his cheerful radio persona), but they were idiots. Beneath that ever-accessible talk-show host veneer—which rendered him approachable to those in need, drawing anyone in distress like birds to a lighthouse—was a deadly force. A munitions expert, he knew his way around—and even through—explosions of all kinds. Yes, a deadly force just as deadly as the top-of-the-line portable broadcast recorder which M had altered to produce a deadly electric charge in its protruding microphone powerful enough to take down a deadly horse-sized duck.

Let the *Radio Times* say what they would about him, because ever since that fateful morning when the Queen herself asked John to head their Covert Vice Division, keeping the streets of London safe was just one of his many areas of expertise. John's time was so valuable that it was invaluable, but that didn't mean he couldn't find the time to create works of auditory art (using a pseudonym) in a second, more experimental show which aired late at night on Radio Caroline. Ken Nordine would be jealous.

John was very, *very* cool.

He popped in a Cream/Derek and the Dominos double-cassette while Sherlock propped his hand against his ear and hummed to himself to block out the noise. John paused to slide the seat backward; his companion must have driven the Aston on their last mission and shifted the seat forward in order to reach the pedals. Sherlock had

clearly forgotten to return it to its original position which took into account John's imposing extra height.

John loved to drive, especially to good tunes, but as he was the better shot, it was occasionally necessary for Sherlock to take the wheel so John could lean out the window in order to hit targets with his unerringly unerring accuracy. This time, Sherlock was in his usual passenger seat and ready to navigate, putting the giant book of London roadmaps in his head to good use.

The average Londoner knew nothing about the Covert Vice Division. That's why they called it covert. But, if the public were to suddenly find out, the city's denizens would flood John and Sherlock's chic, large-windowed penthouse with cards and flowers, expressing their never-ending gratitude for the duo's tireless crusade to keep drugs and weapons off of London's streets. And where would *they* be without M's painstaking research— monitoring chatter and creating dossiers in inconspicuous manilla envelopes.

Every morning at 9 they would head to a central Robins to receive background info on cases so filled to the brim with adventure and intrigue that there was no room for cream and sugar. John strode up to the counter, where he knew his coffee would be waiting for him— along with a coded message scrawled upon a napkin.

He frowned. The napkin read 'JONK'. Joint Operation. The next two letters would indicate which agent they would be working with. NK. Not Known. That meant it was one of the Irregulars— a ragtag group of civilian investigators with their ears to the ground. They could hear of a deal going down long before the official police force, but working with them also meant the case would be very unpredictable, and probably dangerous.

But so was John.

It was Sherlock who kept this loose cannon on the rails.

They had been together less than a year, but John knew he would never want to work with anyone else.

John didn't care for JONK missions. Mostly because they would have to wait for a messenger to come to them, which meant they were stuck there for the time being.

"Why don't you record some ambient sounds for one of your radio experiments?" suggested Sherlock.

"Good idea."

Sometimes John was so busy ridding London's streets of crime that he forgot to prepare for his episodes, or notify his millions of fans of new contests, which was fine, because even though they didn't know he was a secret agent (because...secret...right there in the name), they knew he was a very busy man.

John pulled out his recorder, careful to check that it was on recording mode, not deadly weapon mode, and pressed the non-deadly red button. It was at that very moment that the bell perched atop the coffee shop door rang, and a man came in who John didn't recognise. Sherlock, however, did.

"Wiggins," said Sherlock, addressing the man. "What do you have for us?"

"Drug ring in—"

"Spittlefields," John interrupted.

Sherlock's eyes widened, telegraphing his all-too-frequent shock at John's near-magical observational skills.

"Honestly, Sherlock, if I keep explaining it to you I will lose my patented air of mystery." John winked and gave a dazzling smile. A girl at the counter gaped and dropped her doughnut right into her coffee. Her date did the same with his yum yum.

"Never!" exclaimed Sherlock, still stunned by John's deductive skill. And his handsomeness.

"Well, it's the mud on his shoes. Unique to Spittlefields."

“How absurdly simple!” said Sherlock.

“Well, sometimes it is,” said John as he turned toward Wiggins. “Tell me everything you know.”

Wiggins filled them in, though there wasn’t much to tell. It was the usual: suspected drug manufacturers operating out of an abandoned warehouse. Wiggins gave them directions to this particular abandoned warehouse—on the docks, far from the city center.

“Alright, Sherls, let’s roll!”

John drove this time, since he did not anticipate shooting anyone en route.

They got there in record time, as the lights were always in John’s favour, but the place seemed deserted, even though a Black Tulip stereo system was still belting out “Money for Nothing” on one of those new compact discs.

John turned the music up as the pair searched the place.

“Someone must have tipped them off,” said Sherlock. “No one’s here.”

“It looks that way, but you never know if they keep a spotter somewhere,” replied John, as he unsheathed his trusty PPK.

The place was, in fact, abandoned... as well as a bit of a dump. A strong breeze whisked through an open fire escape, strewing discarded bits of newspaper around the room, and there were more than a few not-quite-empty bottles of Bartles and Jaymes scattered throughout. Still, the hideout had a few surprisingly high-ticket items. Alongside the toppled shelves, where all kinds of instant food— mac and cheese, cup-o-soups in their foam containers, pop-tarts— had spilled onto the floor, was a large microwave. Against the far wall was a Panasonic TV that must have been at least 45 inches wide.

Sherlock glanced around. "I'd say they were doing a brisk business, but stolen goods are always cheap."

John nodded.

The criminals had left a flask sitting atop a Bunsen burner in a corner of a room which vaguely resembled a kitchen. It was still bubbling away, and John took out a handkerchief and carefully shut off the flame. To its right, on a gleaming metal work table, was a press which was clamped shut. Sherlock opened it, exposing a primitive mold which still had a batch of plain white pills hardening within.

"What is it?" John asked Sherlock, as he turned to cover the door whilst his partner continued to assess the makeshift laboratory. John would ensure they didn't get any unexpected visitors. Well, not ones that would stick around, at any rate.

Sherlock smiled and held a pill up to the light between his elegant fingers. His specialty was illegal substances; he could identify any number of drugs at a glance. "It hasn't been branded yet," he said, before popping it into his mouth. "I'll let you know in 20 minutes."

John sighed and ran his fingers through his wind-tossed, sunbleached, perfectly-moussed hair in frustration. Keeping the evidence out of Sherlock was an undisclosed aspect of his job description. And perhaps the most difficult. He reminded himself that street drugs were made to be consumed, whatever it ended up being, but Sherlock's cavalier attitude was always unnerving.

After examining all the rooms and shuffling through the refuse, Sherlock silently gestured toward some recording equipment hidden deep inside a cabinet. The place was bugged.

"Well, looks like we've seen all we needed to see here," John said, convincingly.

“Yes,” said Sherlock. “Let us leave, never to return.”

They headed out to the street, and John easily hopped over the Aston’s door and into the driver’s seat. They peeled around a corner, parked in an alley, and waited.

“John?”

“Yeah, Sherlock?” John said, both handsomely and excitedly. It had been a while since they had a good ol’ fashioned stakeout.

“John,” he said, “you’re turning into a penguin. Stop it.”



NOTES

In a conversation on X with Dr John “Podcast” Watson regarding El’s artwork (on the next page), he mentioned wanting it to be made into a movie. Or a novel. I did the best I could over a weekend and offered up this short story. He suggested it begin with, “Let’s go, Sherlock,” John said, handsomely,” and the rest more or less wrote itself. Tip of the nib to Douglas Adams on turning into a penguin.



Artwork by EL_on_Mars

AUTUMN* VERSES



SPECTRALCHICKEN

I was bitten by both the limerick and Sherlock bugs at about the same time last year. While limericks are usually trite little things (often with a salacious air to them) to share with inebriated English professor mates over a lager, I hope you will enjoy this expanded version of the form as moody, appetizer-sized poems for the darker and colder part of the year.*

WAITING IS Hard

Doctor Watson appreciates fall.†
He loves a crisp morning mail-call.
An invitation!
For crime-solving fun!
He gathers his coat from the hall.

* Not Fall. We are traumatized enough, thank you.

† Oops.

NEEDS MUST

These days there's a chill in the flat.
Watson's taken to wearing a hat.
It keeps his head warm,
Though it's really bad form.
If Holmes is home, they'll have a spat.

SPECTRAL... Illusion?

Holmes and Watson are out on a case;
The blood has drained straight from John's face.
He's not one for fancy,
But even he can see
That floating corpse wrapped in white lace.

BLOOD on the Plow*

On farmland the Yard searches 'round.
None but stubble and chaff to be found.
Sherlock studies the mess,
Finds the hem of a dress.
Who's been harvesting girls on this ground?

THUG-PICKING

In an orchard Holmes captures a fruit
In his glove. Watson looks at his boot.
The flat apples show
A large footprint below
The branch on which perches the brute.

* And for some reason, the scarecrow is wet?

GOT the Tracker Badge

With rain the data's on the ground.
Walking feet, rolling wheels, tracks abound!
Watson's learned a few tricks
About reading the mix.
That one is a very large... hound?!

HE STUDIED for This

Watson knows his way 'round a man's bones.
"I can name every one," he intones.
Sherlock calls him to see
And give identity
To these ones found beneath cobblestones.

BUSINESS EXPENSES

On cases they use all their cunning
Avoiding, they hope, any gunning.
To that end they speed
Quite a lot, so they need
To invest in some good shoes for running.

A RARE SECOND Chance

Sherlock fell*, and left John in a vice:
Couldn't move, couldn't breathe, wasn't nice.
But when he returned
John's whole soulfire burned!
To him it seemed lightning struck twice.

* Well shoot, this isn't even allusion here.

KINDLING

This autumn bonfire is grand.
Watson feeds it issues of *The Strand*.
Sure the rag prints his stuff,
But he's copies enough
To burn extras while new flames are fanned.

SAFETY IS Tedious

Sherlock is a man almost mythic.
He thinks he is quite scientific!
Experiments abound,
Theoretically sound,
But with techniques too far from terrific.

SELECTIVELY EIDETIC

Sherlock's mind can change chaos to order.
He collects and stores facts like a hoarder.
He deletes from his brain
Bits found dull or insane,
And several things past London's border.

POP QUIZ

He's quite fascinated with fests
For reasons not common of guests:
The folks he deduces
Have various uses
For plying his Watson with tests.

JUST AN ILLUSION

If he wants to be found, then he will be.

If he wants to be hid you will not see
His shadowy form
Until sudden breath, warm
On your ear. Surprise! Sherlomancy.*

GOOD DOCTOR, Bad Employee

John is a heroic man --
He came back from Afghanistan.
At work he dispenses
Health care and pretenses;
He's off saving Sherlock again.

MIDNIGHT SERENADE

He screams up from the nightmare again.
That one full of terror and pain.
Among all the dying
His panic is flying,
So Sherlock will calm down his brain.

PENNY-SWEET PAYOFF

Street living makes a bloke tough.
The Irregulars know well enough.
They spy for a shilling
And sometimes are willing,
For candy, to pinch other's stuff.

* Sherlomancers are also able to read you like a book and cause instant aggressive behaviors in their foes. They work best with fighter/healer Johns.

STEP Quickly Now

Watson's taking his wife to a dance
With the latest of music from France.
If Holmes says "Let's go!"
He'll be bowing out, so
She'll quadrille while she's got a chance.

DISGUISE

"Spirit" has more than one import:
The part of yourself that's not transport,
Or a ghost from the past,
Or a drink meant to last,
Or the gum that gives Sherlock a chin wart.

UN ESTUDIO EN ESCARLATA



CAPITULO 1. SR. SHERLOCK HUERTAS

VICTIORE G. RIOS, JHWS “VIC”

In the year 1876 I took my degree of Doctor of Medicine at La Universidad Nacional in Bogotá. Some few months later, I received news of a civil war in the region of my hometown. I was shipped out to Huila to assist on the side of the Liberals as a field medic. The conflict eased for a few years, and it was upon the second time in fighting alongside my fellow soldiers that I collected the wounds that would end my journey down the path of soldier and medic.

I received a bullet to the arm, one which did not do much more than scathe me, but which tampered enough with my nerves to render me useless as a surgeon—the trembling of my hands too severe to be effective. I kept fighting alongside my comrades, until one unfortunate night I was sent to survey the area and an enemy soldier lodged a bullet deep into my thigh. The pain shot through me like lightning finding its mark, white-hot, blinding me to my surroundings and to the subsequent blood loss.

It was entirely due to luck that I did not perish. The

bullet rang through the jungle, loud enough to alert my fellow soldiers, and it is only through rough patches of memory and consciousness that I can recall one of them finding me. I remember myself being clumsily bandaged and dragged towards a busy road.

The last thing I remember about that fateful day was the burning sun on my skin and the sounds of hooves and rattling wheels approaching.

I woke up a few days later in a small house in the countryside; a farmer and his family nursed me back to health, and I continued on my way to the town of my youth, hoping to find my family. The road was hard and my wounds had not fully healed, but I could wait no longer to see them, to hopefully find them in good health despite the nearing ongoing conflict, and this thought was enough to push me forward.

The town, however, did not welcome me with open arms... for there was no one there to do so. The streets were empty except for the rubble strewn about—children's shoes lost in the rush to flee, pieces of wood and ashes scattered over the cobbled streets of my youth. The door to my mother's house was waiting for me, the lock open and the curtains tattered and flapping in the wind. Not a soul was present, and, with a dark cloud over my heart, I collected the few traces of life that had been left behind. I continued on my way with the clothes on my back, my mother's walking stick, a scarf my sister had given me, and deep worries in my soul.

A traveling merchant saw me on the way to Bogotá and picked me up. I spent three turbulent days in his car, and at the end of our journey, my wounds burned more than when I had first received them. I changed the cane for a wheelchair in a pawn shop, and the little money I had only

lasted for two days for a roof over my head. On the third day, I had to sleep on the street, the cold biting my skin, and the noise of the drunks singing and shouting late into the night made sleep impossible to grasp. I was about to give in to fatigue, my body begging for rest, when I heard a familiar voice exclaiming my name.

“Velaz? Jose Velaz, is that you?”

Upon opening my eyes, I was met face to face with one of my old classmates from my university days: young Sr. Miguel Santiago.



“It is you! Dios mío, what has happened to you, Doctor? You’re as thin as a lathe, and—” My young friend gestured towards my chair as he stood up, still bowed slightly, to speak near to me.

“You already know that I went to the front lines, young Santiago.”

My friend chuckled, his alarmed eyes softening as he

smiled. "Don't call me young. You're only a year older than me Jose. Or should I call you 'Old Velaz'?"

"Perhaps. This war has aged me, joven."

The tension returned to my companion's face. "So, you were injured, am I right?"

I looked him in the eyes, then slowly lowered my gaze towards the wheelchair I was sitting in.

"You don't have any place to stay?"

"If you keep naming the obvious, I will start calling you an encyclopaedia."

"Very funny. It seems they could not take your bad habit of bullying your friends."

I smiled at him, and the expression felt foreign to my face after so many rough weeks. My friend's pout started to let up, and he barked out a laugh. He then turned away and walked a couple of paces ahead of me before pausing to look back.

"Are you coming, or not?"

"I'm just giving you a head start," I said, before turning my wheels in his direction and following closely by his side.

We proceeded to a small dining hall, where my friend kindly forced a meal in front of me, which, in the moment, made me flush with embarrassment at my inability to pay him back, but it greatly improved both my humour and health once I had devoured a plate of rice, meat and plantain. I told him all about my days as a medic and soldier, my proudest moments providing care in the field, and the strange injuries I knew would intrigue the young Santiago to distract him from the questions he had obviously been formulating in his mind. I could see the cogs turning behind his spectacled eyes. He finally asked about the injuries that eventually landed me upon the street where he encountered me.

"I would not recommend getting shot. Though if you need a distraction from the turmoil in your head, perhaps then pain works as a diversion for any uncomfortable train of thought," I grumbled before I took a last sip of my agua-panela.

My companion stared at me for a moment, deep in thought by the looks of his furrowed brows and his rapid blinking. "And your family?"

I searched the bottom of my glass for an answer until a glance back at my friend coaxed the words out of me. "No lo se."

He turned his sullen expression to his own cup, hands fidgeting with the earthenware between his fingers.

"I want to think that they're safe. The house was almost empty. One can hope that they got out on time." When I looked back at Santiago, I saw him looking at me pensively, his expression far from the patronising sympathy I had expected of him.

"Do you plan to stay in Bogotá?" He took a small sip from his cup.

"I'm not certain. It is foolish to think I could find comfortable rooms at a reasonable price."

"That's a strange thing," exclaimed my companion, with a curious smile. "You are the second man today that has used that expression to me."

"And who was the first?" I asked.

"A young man who keeps occupying the laboratory at the hospital. I don't know how he keeps getting in; I am quite certain they keep that place under lock and key. Anyway, I was down there this morning when he started to complain about how he could not find anyone who would split the price of some rooms he had found, or who would keep him company."

"Is that so...? Well, if the man needs a companion, then I am certainly the man for him! I should much prefer having a partner to being alone. And as for expenses, I can certainly try to find some odd job to do my part."

"You don't know Sherlock Huerta yet; there might be a reason as to why he has difficulty finding and keeping anyone to share a room with."

"Why, what is there against him?"



"Oh, I didn't say there was anything against him. He is a little queer in his ideas—an enthusiast in some branches of science. As far as I know, he is a decent enough fellow."

"Is he also a student at the hospital?"

Santiago frowned, shaking his head. "Not as far as I know of. He keeps to himself in the laboratory, and he has never taken any systematic medical classes—at least I've never seen him in one—except for when he is bothering a

professor about something or another in between lectures and surgeries.”

“What a curious man indeed... And you’ve never asked him about his occupation?”

“Well, I thought it rude to interrupt him. He is often so engrossed in his work that you can hardly draw him out of it. Or, if he has taken to talking, you can barely get him to stop! That’s how I learned that he has quite the array of knowledge ... on the most peculiar topics as well. He gave me a good lecture on the effects of harsh sun on the skin just last week. Though I still doubt him to be a doctor, as he has never spoken of any patients whatsoever!”

“If there is any man I would like to share lodgings with, it is a studious man who keeps to himself. I don’t think I could handle too much excitement. I’ve picked up enough loud noises and startles in the past few years to last me a lifetime.” I nodded to myself, slowly pushing away from the table. “I would like to meet this man; where can we find him?”

“He is certain to be at the hospital early in the morning. I have seen him there late into the night, but the hospital staff have finally gathered enough courage to start kicking him out after eleven in the evening.”

I chuckled to myself, expectant to meet this enigmatic and studious fellow.

THE NEXT MORNING, Miguel Santiago and I finally trekked towards the hospital. We began with a fine breakfast served to us by his landlady, during which I could’ve sworn I’d heard flute music off in the distance—a pleasant melody floating over the hustle and bustle of this great cesspool of a city—as well as a beautiful contrast to the blasts of guns that had only recently populated my days.

"Now," spoke my companion as we walked through the cobbled streets of Bogotá, "you must not blame me if you do not like the fellow. It is you who proposed that you should share lodgings with the man, so it is fully out of my hands if he gets on your nerves." The words tumbled out from his lips like a cascade, his jaw clamping shut with a snap when he was done speaking.

"Si me cae mal, if he's such bad company, it will be easy to part ways," I answered, giving my friend a small smile. "It seems to me, joven Santiago, that you have some reason to want to wash your hands clean of any consequence. So what is it? You're withholding something. Is his temper that formidable? Does he take questionable company? Spit it out, boy!"

"It does not come naturally to one to express the inexpressible," he answered with a laugh. "Huerta can be a touch too theoretical, too scientific for a regular man's tastes. I find it quite easy to imagine him slipping toxic vegetation into his unwitting friend's tea. Mind you, not out of any anger or malice! But rather out of a pure spirit of inquiry—a curiosity as to the effects such an hierba would produce. To be fair to the man, I also see him taking it himself just as readily. He appears to have a passion for definite and exact knowledge."

"Well, that's quite alright, is it not? Certainly you do not think I am naive enough to be in any danger around this 'Huerta', do you? There's nothing wrong with a little bit of scientific curiosity, Santiago."

"Of course not! But his curiosity can be pushed to an excess! I saw him—in a manner of speaking—drowning the cadavers in the morgue of the hospital just last week! It was quite the morbid sight; his curiosity frightened the skin off of my bones!"

"Drowning... cadavers?"

“Yes, to verify how long it took for the human lungs to fill with water post-mortem. At least that’s what he said he was doing when I walked in on him watching over a basin of water and cadaver.”

“Very well. And yet you say he is not a medical student?”

“No, Dios sabe what his subjects of study are, but I suppose you will be able to inquire upon this soon enough.”

We made our way through the narrow, tiled corridors of the Hospital San Juan de Dios. Slowly, I stood from my wheelchair and leaned my weight on the dark stained wood banisters as my friend carefully carried my chair down the small flight of stairs. The final stretch proved difficult—the slope and crude tiling of the floor nearly knocked me off my chair—so Santiago offered to help me walk the rest of the way to the door of the laboratory, promising to me that my chair would be safe in the hallway for the duration of our conversation with the elusive Sr. Huerta.

I recognised the archway that led to the chemical laboratory ... a great room, lined from ceiling to tile in shelves stocked with flasks of various colours. Each chemical caught the rays of sunlight falling through the window in a different way, throwing cascading shimmers down onto the workbenches, and illuminating a puff of fog that floated in the middle of the laboratory as if it were a dreamlike ghost.

I followed the mist until my eye caught the root of its source—a dark man sat hunched over a workbench, busy with a Bunsen burner whose blue flame he was utilising to steam a small container of liquid. Upon having heard our footsteps, he looked up at us with a devilish grin and

sprang up and over the countertop before landing in front of us... still holding the small test tube in his hand.

"Lo logre, I've found it!" he exclaimed to my companion and then to me. The tall man turned and asked, "Well, what do you think? Isn't it fantastic, Doctor?"



To be continued...

HOLMES AND HAMLET



THE SMALL STAGE AT BAKER STREET

ALOÏS WOOD, JHWS “ALGER”

That world-renowned king of sleuths in his bubble of prose, the one who comes to mind so freely (with or without his friend and biographer) has lived, and continues to live, a long and rich history upon the stage. While drama appears to be a seemingly different realm, his roots are in fact embedded within it, revered even by his own author and conceivably, himself. Something about this figure makes him an irresistible focal point for all manners of engaging narratives, approached by many writers and actors alike. He is not merely a character who lives within art, but one who is incredibly connected and engaged with it — our dearly beloved detective, Sherlock Holmes. Where (forth?) are his beginnings established? We find them in the 17th century, in what may be a surprise for some — Shakespeare’s ‘Hamlet’. The 19th century, it is of the oldest and strongest literary roots of our sleuth.

Detailed in ‘From Hamlet to Holmes: Literary Detective Tradition’ (Nozen, S., Isaxanli, H., & Amani, B.), the genre of tragedy is what laid the brickwork of crime fiction as we know it today. From the following of the

layman amateur pursuing truth, to the reconciling of thought and feeling (in the schools of Descartes and Rousseau); these elements are present a decade before in the likes of Petrovich of Dostoevsky and Dupin of Poe. The paper goes on to say,

"Once the context is shifted from a vast serious setting of embellished castles to a friendly small community investigated by an amateur detective, like Hamlet, the subgenre is categorised as a cosy mystery."

It becomes clear the well from which these early detective authors drew their inspiration. "Hamlet depicts a good example of an inverted detective story" (Setlur & Paul, 2021; Lavin, 1998), as

"The ghost reveals the whole crime to young Hamlet and in the course of the tragedy, the disclosed event finds strong ground."

Essentially, the popularity of crime fiction today is an inversion of the story of the famous Dane.

As Catherine Belsey has stated,

"Hamlet's closest analogues in popular culture are probably found, ironically, in the private detectives and amateur of amateur sleuths of modern crime fiction."

Her statement holds true not only in the actions of the characters, but also in their psyches, their famously puzzling, enigmatical and many-sided, even contradictory, natures.

“Sometimes the process of decoding the intellectual wordings of the character proves to be more difficult than disclosing the facts and evidence.”

This is a very true sentiment for both characters (‘From Hamlet to Holmes’).

It is said that everyone finds a piece of themselves in Hamlet, within the mixture of intellectual thought and reason, to impulsive needs and desires, which sometimes may prove contradictory, for example in Act 3, Scene 3 at the brink of Hamlet’s resolve to take action against Claudius (“Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge”). Holmes, likewise, displays seemingly contradictory and opposing states, as Watson shares, “In an instant Holmes had changed from the languid dreamer to the man of action”, (HOUN) or, “this amateur bloodhound carolled away like a lark while I meditated upon the many-sidedness of the human mind” (STUD). Even Watson, as a keen aficionado of literature, is conscious of this aspect of his friend’s nature. Holmes’s states of “black moods” to high physical activity seem to match his predecessor, the Dane, in his often solemn soliloquies and fierce excitement to do physical battle.

“[They extend] scientific investigation into the realm of the supernatural but also [recognise] how mystical states of mind enhance empirical observation and rational deduction” (From Hamlet to Holmes).

These incredibly profound and advanced aspects of their constitutions are, in large part, what contribute to their timeless and widely-discussed reputations.

It is from a love of Shakespeare and drama that this landscape of authors emerge. In Doyle’s own case, an

awareness and esteem for Shakespeare is certain, as evidenced by his poem titled 'Shakespeare's Expostulation' (1911). A final link comes in the name of his sleuth, first named 'Hugh Lawrence' ('Uncle Jeremy's Household', 1887) to 'Holmes' — a very close likeness to 'Hamlet'. A more thorough form of flattery could not be.

While being rich and artful literary characters in themselves, Holmes's and Hamlet's shared catharsis in and interaction with the stage is undeniable. Shakespearean scholars will speak often about Hamlet's 'play within a play', with the constant use of meta-theatre (referrals to 'seeming', 'acting', 'cue', 'audience', 'stage', which all contribute to theatrical image cluster). Hamlet also shows great love for the Players who come to Elsinore to perform, and even makes use of them for one of the most vital parts of his investigation. The same can be said for Holmes, a character who very often quotes playwrights like Shakespeare, and other writers such as Goethe and Rousseau (Watson's 'list' having been very off!) — a shared indicator that both characters are intellectuals. There is an importance to the speculation of both characters possessing a 'madness' alongside reason. There is Hamlet's noteworthy "antic disposition", yet he still introspects with seriousness and frankness. There are Holmes's "irregular methods" and "black moods", combined with knowledge of philosophers and clear, scientific reasoning. As Hamlet quotes the story of Pyrrhus killing King Priam, Holmes has his own penchant for using theatrical terms and lines. In detailing his hypothesis, he will cry, "Exit the solicitor. Enter the tramp!" (NORW), or even seemingly become a character right from the scripts — "but I hope before the day is past I shall have the upper hand at last!" (HOUN), in rhyming iambic metre, just as a true Shakespearean actor of

formidable mettle would have proclaimed. Take, “The play’s the thing / Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king!” for comparison. Additionally, when we note their shared impish/trickster personalities the image comes clearly together. Conan Doyle’s love for drama shines through in Watson, too, who often refers to his “small stage at Baker Street”. The comparisons are simply unavoidable for them all, in a world where destiny and a zest for adventure is ripe. The world of fiction and drama is sometimes irresistible, especially for our troubled characters, where we can think of hypotheticals or imagine brighter realities, or even amplify what we have. Their regular connection with theatre expresses this want.

Four times in the Canon there are direct comparisons from Holmes to Hamlet:

“Was ever such a dreary, dismal, unprofitable world?”

— END OF CHAPTER 1, *THE SIGN OF
THE FOUR*

“most stale and unprofitable.”

— ‘A CASE OF IDENTITY’

“How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable / Seem to me all the uses of this world!”

— (1.2. 133 - 134)



“I have usually found that there was method in his madness.”

— ‘THE REIGATE SQUIRES’

“Though this be madness, there is method / in ‘t.”

— (2.2. 200)



“Of all ruins, that of a noble mind is the most deplorable.”

— ‘THE DYING DETECTIVE’

“O, what a noble mind is here o’erthrown!”

— (3.1. 144)

It is significant to note of these, that Hamlet is the only theatrical character Holmes is compared to by Watson (or by himself), and also the most referenced of any Shakespeare work. Certainly it is hint enough, from Doyle, where his affections lay for his character and who it was that he longed to create. It additionally shows us how Watson, as Holmes’s closest confidant and observer, views Holmes. It is a high compliment that he should compare Holmes to the noble Dane, as Hamlet is such a cemented figure in English literary history, with Shakespeare’s significance having been revitalised during Victoria’s rule. Doyle set out to create a character equally as timeless, equally as memorable, and in some ways equally as tragic. However, it’s their companionship that always lessens the final feature.

“Horatio for Hamlet is what Watson is to Holmes”

(‘From Hamlet to Holmes’). Consider these two figures who stay by their protagonist unwaveringly, no matter their flaws; when Hamlet goes into a losing battle, or Holmes indulges in “habits less excusable.” They play the role of chronicler, caretaker, and the ones who most probably come the nearest to the truth of their companions, and vow to teach the world its truth.

“And let me speak to th’yet unknowing world / How these things came about. So shall you hear.”

— (5.2. 358 - 359)

“In an incoherent and, as I deeply feel, an entirely inadequate fashion, I have endeavoured to give some account of my strange experiences in [Sherlock Holmes’s] company.”

— ‘THE FINAL PROBLEM’

Their final duty goes to their comrade, serving as some light in (what were perceived as) their tragic ends. Doyle understood the need for the unwavering associate — one who would save us from even the most unfortunate of fates and make us immortal.

Sherlock Holmes, who is by some measures the most adapted literary character of all time, has had an innumerable number of appearances on the stage, compiled in ‘Sherlock Holmes on the Stage’ by Amnon Kabatchnik, since his debut in a one-act musical satire in November 1893. Even Doyle himself contributed to this compendium with a dramatisation of ‘The Speckled Band’, ‘Under the Clock’ and ‘The Crown Diamond’. After William Gillette’s long reign as a suave Holmes, the

sleuth quickly came to the airwaves in sound, and to the screen. Undoubtedly, he is a very successful character in the world of drama. Why is this the case? It’s partially the roots in tragedy, as not merely a piece of art but also a collaborator, his human reflection of the multifacetedness of a person, but also his own curator of art. There is audience participation where they remain in the dark alongside Watson. Holmes often behaves as though he has an audience; bowing “as if to some applauding crowd conjured up by his imagination” (STUD). Drama allows us to delve more deeply into his mysterious mind, as ‘The Secret of Sherlock Holmes’ (1989) had done well with its soliloquies and finally open conversation — a kind that the polite doctor would more than likely keep out of his associate’s memoirs. And even so, drama has been home to many parodies and comedies portraying the detective. The many-sidedness of the character allows for much room to give him a heightened presence within dramatic interpretations. Holmes’s many-sidedness is also useful for writers wishing to delve into their favourite aspects of him and to broaden them.

Holmes’s origins, and indeed his future, are not so much a mystery within the literary realm as perhaps his own canonical personal history might be. His humanity, so vivid that countless have believed the detective and doctor to be real people, is always an exciting vein to return to. He is not merely enjoyable to be through his stories, but also to learn from, and to see ourselves reflected within.

WATSON IN COMIC BOOKS



JOHANNA DRAPER CARLSON, JHWS
“FRIDA”

Comics are a unique visual medium. Traditionally, they’re all about action. If there are too many words, editors and readers get annoyed, and the story risks becoming an illustrated essay.

But Sherlock Holmes stories require dialogue—often lots of it. That’s one reason creating a good Sherlock Holmes comic can be difficult. (For more on this topic, see my essay “What Makes a Good Sherlock Holmes Comic?” in *Reading Holmes!* (Belanger Books, 2023).) Often, our favorite moments involve Holmes and Watson sitting comfortably at Baker Street when a client appears or a case comes their way. There’s plenty of conversation as the circumstances of an adventure are established. The reader wants to know how the great detective made his deductions as well, and it takes a skilled illustrator to keep these kinds of conversations visually interesting.

WHY IS WATSON THERE?

Much like a Doctor Who companion, John Watson is there to listen to Holmes explain things and to ask the questions the reader is wondering about. As thought balloons and narrative captions have fallen out of fashion in comic stories, it's ideal to have someone for Holmes to talk to, and as the more action-oriented partner of the pair—the army doctor always ready with his service revolver in contrast to the more cerebral deductionist—Watson is well-suited to providing some visual action.



John Watson from Sherlock Holmes #1, DC Comics, 1975

He's also the romantic, the one interested in “the fair sex”, which provides an opportunity for a different kind of enticing visual—albeit one not often used in these kinds of comics. Surprisingly, Watson is not used to his full advantage. I believe this is because of a lack of consistent, distinctive, easy-to-read visuals for our favorite best friend.

HOW DO YOU RECOGNIZE WATSON?

Sherlock Holmes, over the years, has been distilled into a collection of props: deerstalker, magnifying glass, pipe. Simply using one of these says “detective”—even to the point where some collect any appearance of an ear-flap hat in comics as a Sherlockian stand-in.

However, there is no similar Watsonian shorthand. If Sherlock Holmes appears, and there’s a man next to him in a mustache and perhaps a bowler hat (often with light hair to contrast Holmes’ more commonly dark), we read that as the Watson role, but those signifiers, on their own, just say “old-fashioned person” or (depending on the mustache style) “hipster”. Without Holmes—with Watson only—what makes a story Sherlockian, anyway?

Watson, thus, is indicated by proximity. He’s the sidekick, and in some comics, that role can be taken by someone else—a young policeman, perhaps, in a comic in a more traditionally Victorian setting.

There’s also the question of his age. Comics are often inspired by other media portrayals, so whether to make Watson middle-aged, or even substantially older than Holmes, may depend on which movie its creators are familiar with. Both the Basil Rathbone/Nigel Bruce films and the more recent Robert Downey Jr./Jude Law movies have inspired comic portrayals.

Recently, Watson has frequently taken on the role of firewall friend. Modern approaches to the characters often focus on how strange or unusual Sherlock Holmes can be. Watson brings the people skills, the emotional translation, the filter for Holmes’ weirdness. We value a Watson for humanizing the “brain without a heart”. The silver lining of this approach demonstrates how each man brings

something to the partnership. It’s a more equal treatment; we read it more comfortably.

VERSIONS OF WATSON

Setting aside those that adapt Arthur Conan Doyle’s original stories more faithfully, let’s look at how Watson has been handled in a brief selection of comics with alternative approaches.

One of my favorite Sherlockian comic reads is *Muppet Sherlock Holmes* (written by Patrick Storck, art by Amy Mebberson, BOOM!, 2011). Accompanying Gonzo the Great as Sherlock Holmes, Fozzie Bear is the good doctor—an excellent choice, especially for those who like the Nigel Bruce/comic relief approach to Watson. (And the mustache suits his fur.)



While there have been comics that featured a Sherlock Holmes without Watson, I’m not aware of the reverse. We

do have one that gives Watson top billing, though. *Watson and Holmes* (written by Karl Bollers and others, art by Rick Leonardi and others, New Paradigm Studios, 2013, reprinted by FairSquare Comics, 2023) is narrated by Jon Watson, a medical intern returned from military service in Afghanistan. It recasts the characters as Black men in New York City.



Watson & Holmes

Sherlock Holmes in the Case of the Missing Martian (written by Doug Murray, art by Topper Helmers, Eternity Comics, 1990, reprinted by Caliber Comics, 2022) is a mashup with H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*. It gives Watson a separate plot line, wherein he is worried his wife Jacqueline, implied to be a former lady of the streets, is a serial killer. It's rather melodramatic.



Sherlock Holmes in the Case of the Missing Martian

THE BEST COMIC WATSON!

It may be cheating to mention him here, but my favorite Watson was played by Donald Pickering in the 1979 TV series *Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson*, and there was an accompanying hardcover annual which contained four short comic stories. He definitely projects the military doctor image.



Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson

But the best Sherlock Holmes comic award goes to *Inside the Mind of Sherlock Holmes* (written by Cyril Lieron, co-written and art by Benoit Dahan, translated by Christopher Pope, published in English by Titan Comics, 2023). It's faithful to the characters, it's a fascinating mystery with meaning beyond the puzzle, and it does amazingly inventive things with page layout. Plus, there are lots of deductions. Because of its format (indicated by the title), Watson takes second billing—but he gets to be both doctor and fighter, as well as newspaper reader to Holmes, canonically.



Inside the Mind of Sherlock Holmes

THIS ESSAY WAS INSPIRED by my interview in the February 26, 2024 Watsonian Weekly podcast. My thanks to Madeline Quinones for conducting it and to Brad Keefauwer for preparing the questions. For more information on these and other comic Watsons, visit my website at SherlockComics.com.

MAGIC AND THE OCCULT IN SHERLOCKIAN FICTION



‘SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SERVANTS
OF HELL’ BY PAUL KANE

EVADARE VOLNEY, JHWS “ELLERY”

Welcome to the sixth installment of my series of essays about Magic and the Occult in Sherlockian Fiction. Now we are going to go dark and bloody—into the eerie world beyond the Schism, of the Order of the Gash, of the Cenobites and the humans who seek them out to be transformed when the mundane world is both too much and not enough. This essay is about Paul Kane’s remarkable 2016 novel *Sherlock Holmes and the Servants of Hell*.

Every fanfiction writer is familiar with the concept of the crossover—when characters from one fictional universe enter another and live by the rules of that world, meet characters from it, and sometimes solve its problems.

It’s not common to see a published work crossing over a public domain property with a fairly recent one still under copyright, but it’s hardly surprising to see editor, writer, and horror historian Paul Kane playing in Clive Barker’s *Hellraiser* universe. There’s been no greater booster of Barker’s dark, bloody, and dangerously alluring world; Kane is the author of *The Hellraiser Films and their Legacy*,

and the co-editor of the 2009 short fiction anthology *Hellbound Hearts* (with his wife, Marie O'Regan). Barker himself authorised this novel and praised Kane's storytelling, and the authors, screenwriters, and actors credited in the acknowledgements are a who's-who of *Hellbound* dedicants... including several notable Sherlockians as well.

The premise of this universe, now a full-fledged shared-world entity, revolves around an uneasy alliance between Earth and Hell. Clive Barker's original 1986 novella *The Hellbound Heart* opened with a man alone in a room in an empty house, obsessed with unlocking a puzzle box that belongs to an ancient occult tradition. Specifically the one known as the Lament Configuration or Lamarchand Box, made by a French maker of clockworks like singing mechanical birds. In Barker's work, the man is Frank Cotton, and the rest of the story tells what happens after. In Kane's novel, this man is...Sherlock Holmes.

'Wait, what?' those familiar might say, 'Cotton was a ruthless hedonist with the moral sensibilities of a lamprey; what has he in common with our beloved detective?'

Obsession.

This is a Holmes who has returned from Reichenbach a changed man, and a haunted one. As in Joe Revill's *A Case of Witchcraft* (installment three of this series, *The Watsonian* Spring 2023), after his symbolic, or perhaps literal, death and rebirth, and after his travels through the world and in particular his study of meditation, Holmes is more open to evidence of things unseen than his younger self had been.

As Watson observes in Part One (while waxing poetic on the film and literary versions of Holmes and his adventures to come in the future) he is concerned about Holmes's mental health—as his beloved friend is giving

himself up to ever more extreme risks and returning with strange wounds and scars. He has lost his Mary, and fears losing Holmes again as well. In his own grief and loss, Watson is able to understand that, in his own strange way, Holmes is also in mourning. "...to compare the loss of a wife to an arch-enemy sounds strange, I know. Nevertheless, I felt sure that they were two sides of the same coin, Holmes and Moriarty. As brilliant as each other, they balanced things out, good and evil. So when one was taken away..."

There is no peace for Holmes without a puzzle to solve, and so the appearance at 221B Baker Street of a family named Cotton, seeking a missing brother, seems to open up a new field of hope. Disappearances spread. One by one, new clients show up with a vanished loved one. A lady journalist missing her lesbian partner. A cousin of an old army friend, whose wife recounts his distance and disaffection. Once again, Watson is reminded of his own deepest problem: "I thought about Holmes after he came back to me, the loss of Moriarty too much for him to bear. How the absence of a thing exposes how important it was to you when you had it." An owner of a scandalous "gentleman's club" that shocks the Victorian London which also needs this outlet to exist, and no less a luminary than Mycroft Holmes, are involved in the summoning in this case. The sadistic and violent pleasures on display at the Vulcania Club are a mere thin foreshadowing of what's to come.

Holmes and Watson infiltrate this club in disguise, and it's a red-blooded, thrilling caper full of insinuation and suggestion, along with a very narrow escape that leads to investigating yet another disappearance—that of a somewhat crooked Scotland Yard copper. As you might suspect, all of these complete and inexplicable

disappearances (as well as, it's suggested, that of a certain James Phillimore) have common elements that will be familiar to readers of Barker's work and fans of the *Hellraiser* films. Through investigation, our heroes are able to trace both the origin of a work of art and a certain sinister puzzlebox to France.

To crack this case, Holmes and Watson must separate, and the book's middle sections take on different points of view: Watson in first-person, Holmes in third. Watson is dispatched to France, to investigate Lamarchand himself, who is held in a mental institution operated by the sinister Dr. Malahide. Our stalwart Watson accomplishes much and gets some truly valuable information, but at great and harrowing cost to himself. There is a terrible tension of a telegram never received, which makes the overlapping time of the Holmes and Watson narrative sections a nail-biting suspensefest.

Meanwhile, Holmes has his own existential crisis to grapple with. In this world, it turns out, he and Moriarty both truly went over the cliff together. Holmes was snatched from the abyss. How? Why? This is part of what has been driving him to experiment with ever more deadly drugs, Russian Roulette, and visiting contagious-disease victims unprotected; his drive to solve mysteries has become intertwined with a death wish.

The novel makes it clear. "Hence what Watson would call his 'self-harm,' he saw as anything but. It was only strengthening him. In the East he had allowed practitioners to cover his body in pins; in Polynesia, he had spent time with a tribe who walked across hot coals and swallowed fire, so as to experience such things himself (taking their exercise to extremes, it had to be said). He had practised the Okipa ceremony more times than he cared to recall, allowing his body to be pierced and suspended by

hooks and chains, something he continued to do privately upon his return to London.”

So what happens when one actually solves the Lament Configuration, and opens the puzzle box? One receives a visit from the mangled and mutilated agents of the Order of the Gash, the terrifying beings known as the Cenobites, dedicants of the sadomasochistic torments of hell. And if they judge you worthy, *they make you one of them*.

Watson is freed by a mysterious ally from his own torments in Paris and comes to Holmes’s aid just in time—or does he? For both of them will have to take a journey deep into the Abyss.

I would rather have you read the magnificent and epic battle scene climax in the realm of the Cenobites relatively unspoiled, but I will let you know that the cast of characters includes the ghost of sweet Mary as savior and guide—in her own way, taking on the role of the Mary who is so often prayed to by the desperate—and the new Engineer of the tortured legions, who is an impostor who has recently usurped that role to command his own army of steampunk Eldritch abominations, with ambitions to take over the operation entirely. You may suspect his identity, dear reader. Unlike Lake Superior in the famous song, the Reichenbach Falls seem to give up their dead generously.

In the course of this battle, the mythology and cosmology and magickal rules of the Hellraiser world are elaborated on and used to their fullest, as magickal weapons and the books of knowledge needed to wield them jump to Watson’s touch with Mary’s guidance, and Holmes himself is in a position of command of the old order that the new poser Engineer seeks to overthrow, for someone that’s somehow even worse.

The ending of the story is not an unhappy one, but

neither is it truly happy, for readers of *The Hellbound Heart* know what must be done to bring a former Cenobite back to the world of the living. It is not impossible, but it comes at a high cost. An aging Watson, who has lived to witness two wars beyond his imagining and some unflattering depictions of himself on film, commits a tale too shocking to tell in his time to paper before he lays down his pen for good. His directions to burn the manuscript were clearly not followed. And we are better off for this.

IN ABSENTIA



PART TWO

SEBASTIAN

L *leave it to Sherlock Holmes to cause a ruckus at the most inopportune times.*

The thought would come to John later... when Sherlock opened his eyes for the first time.

It was late Tuesday night, and Mycroft only had so many excuses to stay out of the office, so he'd gone back to his house to get a few hours of rest before heading to work the next morning. And John... John had been catching cat naps on and off in a terribly uncomfortable hospital armchair. It was a fairly high-backed number with barely enough padding to make it comfortable for sitting in hours at a time and wooden armrests that were not quite wide enough. John's arms fell off the thing in the middle of the night and woke him.

Being a soldier meant that he'd trained his body to sleep lightly. His ears were so attuned to the sounds of the room that even the slightest change in the tone of the machines would wake him as well. A bit after 3 am, John was awoken by a quickening of Sherlock's heart rate monitor. It wasn't a large enough change to alert the nurses, but he'd gone to

sleep many a night to the rhythm of Sherlock's heart. When it changed, John knew and was instantly on alert.

What he saw made his own heart stop.

"Sh-Sherlock..." John's voice failed him at the most inauspicious time. "Can... you hear me?"

Sherlock's eyes fluttered open for just a moment. Light blue orbs shifted over towards the source of the sound. For a heartbeat, their eyes met, before Sherlock's closed.

"Sherlock... Sherlock..." His monitor went back to the steady, beating rhythm it had been for the past month and a half.

What had felt like flying for the briefest of moments shifted to a free fall. Sherlock had been awake, just for an instant, and then fell back unconscious again.

There was no recognition in those eyes.

John desperately clung to the hope that it was because he was just now beginning to come to, and Sherlock wasn't really fully conscious, but deep in his brain, in the dark recesses that he didn't want to delve into, he knew what it could also mean.

My Sherlock, that beautiful, brilliant detective, may be gone forever.

John knew what damage to the frontal lobe could do. Even if patients woke up quickly and had little impairment to their speech, the frontal lobe had an important part to play in many functions. A significant injury could alter emotional responses, personality, impulse control, the ability to concentrate, initiative, social skills, and interpreting the environment, among other things. All of those were vital to 'The Work', as Sherlock had always called it. There were so terribly many things that could permanently alter the very core of who Sherlock was.

John shook those blasphemous thoughts off. He

couldn't think like that, not yet. It was still too early. He had to focus on helping Sherlock wake up first, and then they could deal with the repercussions.

John looked at his watch. 3:11. He knew he shouldn't wake Mycroft, but if Sherlock's brother found out he'd woken up and John hadn't told him, it'd be worse.

Much worse.

He'd seen what "The British Government" could do to people, and he didn't want to get on the man's bad side. He took his phone out of his pocket and typed out a text message.

Sorry to send a text so early. I saw Sherlock's eyes open. It was only for about two seconds. He looked over at me when I spoke. JW

John started to type about how there was no recognition in his eyes, but he quickly deleted it. If it had only been a one time thing, there was no reason to unduly worry Mycroft. He hit send. A moment later, he got a response.

I'll be there in fifteen minutes. -M-

You should try to get some sleep. I'll inform you if anything else happens. JW

John knew the fact that he got no reply meant Mycroft was already on his way—damn the time of night, and damn his job tomorrow.

Almost precisely fifteen minutes later, Mycroft walked in. Like always, he placed his umbrella by the door and his briefcase on the table. He was, as ever, impeccably dressed. One wouldn't have been able to tell that it was almost four

in the morning. He looked like he was ready to walk into his office.

“Any change?”

“No.”

John smiled sadly at the routine question and answer. It was their greeting. It was never ‘Hello, how are you today, have you slept? Have you eaten? Have you showered?’ Sherlock always came first.

It was always Sherlock.

“He hasn’t moved since I texted.” John finally elaborated, after a bit of an awkward silence. “I called a nurse in, and she said it was a good sign that he was attempting to regain consciousness, but it still may take some time. People don’t suddenly wake up like in the movies.”

Mycroft nodded, but didn’t answer.

John sighed and looked down at Sherlock. The vast majority of his wounds had healed, and the long cast for his arm fracture had been removed. A part of his head had been shaved before the insertion of the ICP meter, and now the hair was growing back. This meant there was an almost bald, square patch of scalp. Sherlock had always been so fastidious about his appearance, especially his hair—a curl was never out of place. If it’d been for any other reason, John might have found that bald spot funny.

Silence fell over the room like a thick carpet.

A short time later, one of the nurses came in to do her hourly checkup—a part of his constant vital signs monitoring. She quietly went to work, quick and efficient. She wrote down notes about the settings of the respirator—browsing through the machine’s history—and did the usual panel of simple neurological tests before leaving without a word. It was a strange comfort. All this time, John had never had much of a conversation with any of

the nurses, never bothered to try to learn their names, to ask about what they liked or disliked, or what they did outside the hospital. But having them here every hour meant that Sherlock was still alive, and they were still fighting for him. With him.

While the nurse was in the room, she'd removed the sheet that was pulled up to Sherlock's chest, revealing the short hospital gown he was wearing that did nothing to hide his thin legs. Sherlock had always been thin, but he looked positively skeletal after being in a coma for weeks. John knew that it was going to be a very long time before he was going to be able to sit up or stand by himself. He was only too glad when she pulled the cover back over him. Seeing him this way drilled a hole into his heart.

Night slowly turned into day. The curtains were closed, but John could tell by the amount of light coming through where the two pieces of fabric met the appropriate time. He didn't have much else to do when the days stretched out to eternity, so over the weeks he'd learned to *observe* instead of just see.

Wouldn't Sherlock be proud?

Once again, Mycroft managed to make a few phone calls to ensure that he'd be able to stay at the hospital that day. John had to wonder, with everything else going on, how much work was he getting done?

Sherlock stirred again a few hours after dawn. His eyes sluggishly opened, drawing halted breaths from the two people in the room.

"Sherlock. Can you understand me? Do you know where you are? Blink once for yes." Mycroft spoke slowly and deliberately, enunciating each word for maximum clarity.

Sherlock did turn his eyes towards Mycroft, but no response of any sort came. His eyes were half-lidded and

glassy, like he was looking a thousand miles away instead of at his brother.

“Sherlock... William?”

Hearing Mycroft say his given name seemed to do something to Sherlock. He blinked a few times, like he was trying to puzzle out what was going on, trying to piece his thoughts together. He stayed like that for a few seconds, neither of the other men daring to speak or breathe, before Sherlock turned his eyes upwards again and closed them.

John had no idea what to say to Mycroft, the man’s face told the whole story. He looked like someone had murdered his brother in front of him. The emotion on his face was raw, like an open sore. He was appalled, afraid, utterly *devastated*. He’d seen what John had. There was emptiness behind those blue eyes.

Without a word, Mycroft got up and walked into the bathroom attached to Sherlock’s room. The door closed and locked. John could hear the sounds of retching from the bathroom. A short time later, there was a flush and the running of water, longer than it would normally take to wash one’s hands. When Mycroft stepped out a moment later. John saw his eyes. They were red and puffy, and despite his best efforts, tear marks were still visible on his chin. But John said nothing, and Mycroft sat back down like nothing had happened, his face a mask of indifference once again.



THROUGH THE NEXT couple of days, Sherlock drifted in and out of consciousness. Every time he’d stay awake a little longer, but he showed little indication that he knew who John or Mycroft were. Sometimes he squeezed their hands when they asked him to, though his compliance

seemed rather random, without rhyme or reason. There was no way to tell how comprehensible a sound he might be able to make, since the tracheostomy made any attempts to speak impossible. He had made a leaky grunt a few times, but that had been the whole of it, so far.

The doctors asked him to perform some simple muscle movements, to which he partially complied, which was somewhat promising. Two days after starting to wake up, he was given an 11 on the Glasgow scale. He continued to show more awareness of the people present, but it was hard to tell what he could or couldn't comprehend, since he couldn't speak.

Every tiny step forward filled John with a warm hope, but it was tempered by the lingering cancer that entered his mind, growing and festering. When Sherlock finally did fully rouse, what shape would he be in? Nothing could halt the spread of the doubt that had taken seed in the darkest recesses of his mind.

It was agonizingly slow watching Sherlock become more and more aware. He moved his head to look at whomever was talking to him, and sometimes he would respond—could blink once or twice to answer yes or no. Even with that, John was never quite sure if he was actually answering or simply blinking. John would have expected—or at least hoped—that he'd attempt to talk, even if he couldn't because of the tracheostomy tube. So far, other than the couple of low grunts, he had not.

A number of tests were frequently repeated to assess recovery as Sherlock slowly started to re-enter the world. Despite the fact that John wasn't anything close to a neurosurgeon, he knew a bit about traumatic brain injuries and some of the tests they were going to perform.

A new MRI was done, the results of which were not available right away. On that same day, a battery of other

tests were also performed with the assistance of a brain injury specialist from the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery who was doing his weekly visit.

If—hopefully *when*—he became more communicative, John knew that further neurological tests would be undertaken to test his abilities, such as the Rey-Complex Figure for visual memory, and the Kinura Box Test for apraxia—the awareness of a body in space.

The trip to the radiology department for the MRI drained Sherlock of what little energy reserves he had, and he reacted very little to the company in his room that afternoon. It'd been ages since either John or Mycroft had been home, and though they both ached to stay, they also understood that being at hospital while Sherlock was going to be otherwise indisposed with testing was rather useless. Mycroft called for a car. Forty minutes later, John was dropped off at his flat. He watched the car speed off, taking what he was sure was an equally bone-weary Mycroft home.

As much as John knew he should take a shower—it had been an embarrassingly long time since he'd had one—he couldn't steer himself away from his bed. He collapsed onto it, fully clothed, and instantly fell asleep.

He was so tired that not even the nightmares could awaken him from his slumber.

What finally woke him was his phone ringing. Consciousness ever so slowly seeped back into his mind. Everything was dark and hazy. He fumbled a couple of times, almost knocking his phone off the bedside table.

How had it even gotten there? I don't remember taking it out of my pocket.

"H-hello?" His voice was slurred, gravelly with sleep.

"Doctor Watson. I tried texting you several times. There was no answer. This is my third attempt at phoning

you. I was about to send Anthea to make sure you were still alive.”

“Mycroft... are you at the hospital?” John tried to wake up enough to determine the news by the tone of the man’s voice, but between his own grogginess and the annoying flat tone that the Holmes family excelled at he couldn’t gather any information.

“I am. The tests are done, and the MRI has been evaluated by a neuro-radiologist. Are you ready to come back to discuss the results?”

That woke John up quicker than 10 cups of coffee.

“Yes, but can’t you tell me now?”

“The doctors would like to speak with us personally.”

“Have they... already talked to you?” Dread pooled deep in his stomach.

“They have, but they’d like to explain it in more detail to both of us.”

“Is it... bad?” John held his breath, his whole body tense.

There was a pause. It felt like the world stopped.

“It’d be easier if you came back to hospital. The car should be arriving any moment now.”

Before John could say anything, Mycroft rang off, and a moment later a car horn honked outside his flat. He looked out the window for the first time since he woke up. It was already late evening. He must have slept almost six hours. That was more sleep than he’d gotten in at least a week, John had to admit. For the first time in over a month, he felt slightly less exhausted. Though, as a doctor, he knew that one long nap wouldn’t make up for weeks of sleep deprivation. He quickly changed clothes, grabbed a bag of crisps that he hoped wasn’t out of date, and went out to meet the car.

If the other drives to the hospital had seemed slow, this

one seemed downright backwards. Had it taken an hour to get there? It certainly seemed like it. John's mind contemplated every terrible thing the doctors could say... Broca's speech center destroyed... mind like a child... What if he couldn't walk, or talk? What if Sherlock couldn't remember who they were, or even who he was?

John's thoughts spiraled lower and lower... his breath grew shallow, his vision blurry. He could feel a panic attack coming on. Quickly he lowered the window and stuck his head out into the cool night air. He closed his eyes and focused on controlling his breathing...

In... Out... In... Out...

After what seemed like an eternity, he felt himself calming down. His heart slowed to a more normal pace, and he was able to eventually get his breathing under control. John spent the rest of the ride looking out at the lights of London as the city came alive in the evening. When they finally arrived, John ran as fast as his legs could carry him through the hospital and up to Sherlock's room. He was almost glad, strangely enough, that Sherlock was sleeping. He wasn't sure he could look into those vacant cerulean eyes right now.

"Mycroft... What's going on?" John was panting and out of breath. He'd been doing pretty much nothing the last seven weeks, and his body wasn't used to such bursts of exercise.

"Please, take a moment to gather yourself. The doctors should be back any moment to speak with us."

John took his customary seat at Sherlock's right side. "He's..."

"Just asleep."

"Oh." John paused. Now that he was actually in front of Mycroft, he tried once again to read the man's mood.

But as usual, Mycroft kept a neutral tone, only frustrating John more.

“Damnit, Mycroft. What’s going on with Sherlock? Tell me!” John yelled. Before Mycroft could answer, a nurse came in and admonished John for being too loud. As the nurse was leaving, the team of doctors walked in.

An older man with salt and pepper hair and a short, well-trimmed beard stepped forward. “Good evening, Mr Holmes, and Doctor Watson. I know we’ve met before very briefly. I’m Doctor Simpson, Mr Holmes’s head physician here at the ICU.”

John tried as hard as he could to concentrate enough to remember the names of the other doctors as they were introduced, but his mind was still stuck on Sherlock, and if he was honest, he didn’t care who they were at this moment. He just wanted to know the prognosis.

“... Doctor Watson?”

Apparently someone had been speaking to him.

“I’m sorry, what? I apologize, I haven’t gotten a lot of sleep lately.”

Since this all began...

“It’s okay. We understand. I wanted to make sure you were ready to talk about Mr Holmes’ prognosis.”

YES, PLEASE. FINALLY.

“Yes. How is he, Doctor?”

He leaned his head towards the door. “If you two will please follow me, I’d like to talk about this in another room.”

John knew what that meant. Whatever it was, it was bad, and because they were not sure how much Sherlock understood at this point, it was best to not talk about it in front of him, in case he woke up while they were discussing his case. John’s heart dropped.

They were led to a small room with a long, dark wood

table and a bevy of rolling chairs that were pushed in under it. The doctors crowded in on one side, and John and Mycroft were left sitting by themselves on the other.

“You asked about Mr Holmes’ prognosis. The short answer is, not good at this moment, but that’s normal for a severe traumatic brain injury.”

Just when John thought he couldn’t break apart any further, he was proven wrong. The doctor saw the look on John’s face and quickly continued.

“It’s not unusual for patients with traumatic brain injuries to have to re-learn how to speak and walk and do other day-to-day activities. These can be relearned over time with the help of physical and speech therapies.” The doctor paused for a moment to let it all sink in. “The other issue is, with any brain injury, if specific parts of the brain are damaged, it can cause damage to certain functions. Often, in car crash injuries with front and side impacts, as in this case, we see damage to the frontal and temporal lobes. Mr Holmes does appear to show significant deterioration and diminished metabolism in both of these, signaling that there are areas which may have suffered permanent damage. This is not surprising, but we had been hoping the damage wouldn’t be this extensive once the acute phase passed.

“Depending on the location and severity of the injury, there can be issues with many different functions, including sensory input, communication, comprehension, sensation and coordination, among others. It’s impossible to know what has been affected, or to what extent other areas of the brain might compensate to take up the function of injured areas. It’s possible to remove the tracheostomy now, his swallowing and protective airway reflexes seem intact. We’ll do that tomorrow and request a speech assessment

consult. I believe that within a few days we'll know enough to create short and long term plans for him.

"The most improvement will happen over the first six months. After two years, the patient will not usually improve much, if at all. You have to understand that even though he will go through therapy to relearn life skills, it's likely he'll still have permanent changes. Those can include personality changes—sometimes patients will be more aggressive, they may have trouble paying attention, and may get agitated, frustrated, or overstimulated too easily. Most of the time there will be long term issues with balance and coordination, and a patient with a TBI will fatigue much easier than normal."

The doctor took a long look at Mycroft, and then back to John. "I know it sounds very bad right now. We'll make sure both of you are part of his recovery. Every brain injury is different. We can't say what his precise prognosis will be. That will depend a lot on him. Having support from family and friends has been proven to greatly improve the recovery of traumatic brain injury patients."

The room was deathly silent. John opened his mouth to speak, but nothing came out. They'd told him everything and nothing at once. It was bad, but they weren't sure how bad. He might recover, but they didn't know how much. He understood as a doctor that these types of injuries could vary widely, but they'd given him very little hope that Sherlock would ever be the way he was before.

Finally, Mycroft spoke for both of them. "Thank you, doctors, for the valuable information. I think Doctor Watson may need some time to process this. Perhaps he can speak with you in the morning if he has any further questions."

"Of course, Mr Holmes, Doctor Watson. Have a good evening."

“Thank you.”

The doctors slowly filed out, and once again the room was silent.

“Doctor Watson.”

Why does it sound like Mycroft’s talking to me from underwater?

His mouth is moving, but I can’t understand the words. My whole world feels like it’s full of syrup, sticky and slow.

“Doctor Watson.” The voice was slightly raised.

All I can hear is my pulse beating a drum rhythm in my ears. I can’t take a full breath, my chest feels full and tight, an elephant’s weight, pressing down on me...

Since when did the room look like it was a lens smeared with petroleum jelly? Everything is wavy and out of focus.

John looked over at Mycroft with slightly glazed eyes. His breathing was shallow and fast, and there was a fine sheen of sweat at the edge of his hairline. Mycroft got up and walked over to him.

“John. You’re having a panic attack. Breathe deep. In and out. I’m going to touch your shoulder now. I’m initiating contact.” Even with the warning, John tensed visibly when a hand gently brushed against his shoulder.

“I want you to breathe in, count to 5, then breathe out. Count in your head.”

Somewhere through the haze and breathlessness and fear, John heard Mycroft’s voice. He took a deep breath and counted...

1... 2... 3... 4... 5...

Slowly, he let his breath out.

“Good. Do it again.”

Slowly, painfully sluggishly, the dimness began to clear. John’s heart was no longer slamming in his chest. It took several more repetitions of steady breathing before he finally started to feel some semblance of normality.

Normal, but not really.

Silence filled the room, leaking into all the empty spaces. It was quite a while before John closed his eyes and took a few deep breaths. “Th-thank you.” His voice was low and wavering.

“Of course, Doctor Watson.”

Anxiety still lurked in every muscle of his body. He was stiff and uptight, keyed up. The room seemed wobbly, like it was slightly off center. He’d had plenty of panic attacks in the past. He knew the feeling would pass, but it’d take some time.

“If you’ll be alright by yourself for a moment, I have some further questions for the neurologists. After that, I’d like to find an empty bed for you to sleep in. I think it’ll behoove you to stay out of Sherlock’s room for a bit.” Mycroft didn’t have to say what they were both thinking.

Looking at Sherlock only makes me worse.

John hated to admit that he wasn’t sure he’d disagree with that statement. He went to a small bathroom on the side of the meeting room to splash water on his face while Mycroft spoke to someone at the nurses station. John was just drying his face when Mycroft came back in.

“You’re in luck, Doctor Watson. There’s a room reserved for family members who have come a great distance to visit, and it’s currently unoccupied. The bed linens have already been changed. It’s only for tonight. You should get some rest.”

That was one of the strange aftereffects of a panic attack, John thought. Even after a decent sleep, they always made him extremely tired.

“Thank you, Mycroft.” John made it out the door of the meeting room, where he was met by a nurse who led him to the family room. He climbed into the bed and was asleep within minutes.



A LIGHT SHAKE on the shoulder woke John from his surprisingly nightmare-free slumber. His eyes quickly opened and he almost immediately sat up, blinking his eyes to adjust to the overly bright room. He hadn't even thought to pull the curtains closed the night before. The low morning sun had made a beeline for his face.

Damn this stupid, east-facing room.

"Good morning, Doctor Watson." Mycroft's tone was not nearly as cheerful as those words usually warranted. "The doctors are performing a decannulation, removing the tracheostomy tube."

The cloudiness of sleep dissipated. With a quick rub of his eyes, John was finally able to focus. He turned to the man speaking to him.

"Mycroft," he said simply. John was still slightly edgy and nervous from the panic attack yesterday, but it wasn't nearly as bad as when he'd first come out of it.

"They expelled me from the room during the procedure. I decided that it was a good time to wake you."

"What time is it?"

"Just after ten. Between yesterday afternoon and last night, I believe you've gotten more sleep than you have in the past seven weeks combined."

For a moment, John was confused. It was an odd thing for Mycroft to say. Then his brain caught up with him, and he took it for what it was—a somewhat half-hearted attempt at a joke. He smiled softly at Mycroft.

"Thank you."

"For what?"

"Everything. You've been... an anchor. I should've been the one consoling you this whole time. He's your brother. You're one of the strongest people I've ever met. You

Holmeses are made of some pretty sturdy stuff.” John managed a half smile, but Mycroft looked like he wasn’t even in the room any more.

“I’ve had to be strong my entire life. I’m used to it.” The tiny glimpse into Mycroft’s mind surprised John, and he stayed quiet. But as fast as it appeared, the melancholy look on his face was gone again. Mycroft quickly slid on his impassive mask and turned away. “Now come along, Doctor Watson. Sherlock will be starting therapy today, and we don’t want to be late.”

John shakily got up from the bed and followed Mycroft to Sherlock’s room. As soon as they walked in, they noticed he was awake and alert. Sherlock’s eyes followed them as they took their seats, John taking his normal spot. It was strange to see a big white pad of gauze and medical tape on Sherlock’s neck instead of the ugly light blue tube that had been there for so long.

“Good morning, William.” Mycroft tried to sound as lighthearted as he could, which sounded foreign to John’s ears. Sherlock turned his head slightly toward Mycroft, but did nothing else. “Do you know where you are? Can you nod or shake your head?” There was no response for a moment, but finally, there was a small shake of the head—definitely a deliberate movement.

“You understand me. That’s good.” Mycroft smiled at Sherlock. It wasn’t much, but it was more than they’d gotten from him the day before.

John’s stomach curled in a bit. Was his roommate—his best friend—still there? Perhaps there was some hope.

Why isn’t he trying to talk? Christ knows it’s usually impossible to get the man to shut up.

“You were in a car accident. You’ve been unconscious for a very long time,” Mycroft said softly. John wondered if

it was a conscious choice for Mycroft to talk to him slowly, like he was a child, or was it just instinctual?

“Can you remember who you are?” There was a very soft nod. John sighed audibly. He canted his eyes upwards, breathing a silent prayer to some higher power—one he had never believed in before all of... this happened. The old saying ‘There are no atheists in foxholes’ seemed rather appropriate here, John thought. He felt like he had been in a foxhole for months. And now—just maybe—his stay was coming to an end.

“You can attempt to speak if you’d like to.” Mycroft said softly. “Your throat may be dry, but without the tube you can talk. Try to say something.”

Sherlock looked at him like he was conversing in a foreign language. After a few moments, John could see that his brain had interpreted what Mycroft said, and he shifted a little in bed, attempting somewhat unsuccessfully to sit up a bit more.

Mycroft was patient, and waited until he was comfortable again. “Now, try to say something. Can you say your name?”

Sherlock tried to form the sounds, but only a couple of hoarse, unintelligible syllables came out.

“It’s okay. You’ve only just woken up. I do apologize. I shouldn’t have pushed you so early.” Mycroft looked sadly at his little brother and gave Sherlock’s hand a gentle touch. John tried not to shatter to pieces. Seeing Sherlock like this, it was just too much.

I’d die happy if I could just hear him say his name.

John noticed that a nurse had left a small cup with ice chips in it. “Here, Sherlock, take this, suck on it. I know it’s going to be tough, but don’t chew it, and don’t swallow it whole. It should help your throat a little.” John took one of the chips and gently put it in Sherlock’s mouth. Relief

flowed over Sherlock's face when the water started to dribble down his throat. John unclenched the nervous fist he didn't even realize he'd been making with his other hand.

"Let's stick to yes and no questions then." Mycroft continued with the child-like tone after Sherlock had sucked down a few of the ice chips. "Are you in any pain right now?"

Slowly, Sherlock shook his head.

Well at least that's good.

"I wonder. Does he remember who we are?" John asked, meaning the question for Mycroft. But as he spoke, Sherlock's head slowly turned towards him. He looked at John... *Really* looked at him, and not through him like he had when he'd first woken up. Then to John's utter relief, Sherlock nodded his head.

I could swear that's the same annoyed look he used to give me when he thought I'd said something dumb, the 'Before Sherlock', the detective in the funny hat.

"You... do remember me?" John didn't even care that there were tiny pools of moisture forming in the corners of his eyes.

There was another nod, just a bit stronger this time.

Sherlock was still looking at John, staring right into his eyes, unblinking. John knew that stare, the detective had it when he was about to say or do something very important and he needed to make sure John was giving him his full attention. Sherlock took a deep breath, and spoke one word. It was more like a breathy exhale, but the doctor knew it for what it was.

"Ahhhhnnnn..."

Oh God, he said my name. The first thing out of his mouth was MY name...

John's heart soared. "Yeah, that's right. Good job."

John sniffled and grinned widely at Sherlock. When he glanced over to Mycroft, the smile he returned was one of pure relief and joy—something he'd never seen on the man's face before.

Sherlock looked over to his brother and breathed out a word that sounded like “Myyyy...”

Mycroft's eyes went wide, and he turned to John. “He hasn't called me by that name since he was a child.”

Was it because his throat was sore and he was still confused and exhausted? Or perhaps it was something more...troubling? That was a thought John simply could not entertain at this moment. He quickly shook it away, locking it deep into the recesses of his mind.

“Yes, William. It's My. I haven't heard you say that in a long time.”

Had Mycroft's voice actually... broken?

John felt like he was intruding on a private family moment, like he was privy to something he shouldn't be a part of. Something... familial.

“I'm glad to have you back, brother mine.”

To both of their complete surprises, Sherlock actually *smiled*.



A KNOCK on the door halted any further conversation.

“Good morning. I'm Emily Thompson, from the Neurological Rehabilitation Unit.” John vaguely remembered her as one of the half dozen doctors that had been introduced last night. “I'm going to be Mr Holmes' physical therapist from now on. I'm glad you're both here. I know that you've both been present through his entire stay, and intend to help with his recovery.” She paused for a moment.

“I’ll be doing some exercises with Mr Holmes to start rebuilding his muscle mass. We’re going to begin here in his bed, and when he’s a bit stronger he’ll go to the physical therapy room where he’ll get more intense training. I intend for you two to help as well. I’m going to show you ways you can help him exercise as you sit here with him throughout the day. They’ll be short activities, so they won’t tire him too much, but his muscles are going to need a lot of work to get back to their former strength. It’s also likely we’ll need to do a lot of work on balance and coordination, judging by the neurologists’ reports.”

She showed them some range of motion exercises they could do, which mostly consisted of moving the arms, legs, wrists, ankles, hands and feet in continual circular motions. It would work the muscles and help with joint stiffness and pain. They practiced a few times under her supervision until she was confident they knew what to do. When their training was done, she started her own exercises, testing grip, finger flexibility and trunk strength to determine what she had to work with, and the best way to move forward.

After just 30 minutes, Sherlock was sweating and panting. He hadn’t spoken a word the entire time, only grunting with exertion at some of the particularly hard calisthenics. Even without words, John could read his face and body language. He was tired and anxious and wanted this to be over.

Mycroft had a worried look on his face. He could read the signs as well. “I’m sorry, William. I know you don’t like this. But you were unconscious for a long time. Your muscles need exercise. If you want to get better, this has to be done.” Mycroft gently put his hand on his brother’s shoulder.

The therapist left a short time later. Mycroft was still trying to calm Sherlock down, He was fidgety and making

grunting noises like he wanted to say something but wasn't sure what or how. No matter what Mycroft said or did, it didn't seem to be helping, and John could see the frustration hidden just under the surface of the older brother's face. He could only imagine how much Sherlock must have been even more frustrated at not being able to give voice to his thoughts.

John was feeling more and more like a third wheel, like this was something to be worked out between Mycroft and Sherlock. He knew Mycroft was trying to be the good big brother and help him calm down and relax. John thought maybe now was a good time to try to grab a sandwich, so they could have some time to themselves. He got up and started heading towards the door.

"Aaahhhnnn."

He wants me to stay...

John wasn't sure how, but his heart both broke and soared at the same time.

"You... want me to stay?"

"Y'sssss.." There was a soft nod.

"Ok, I'll stay then."

Sod ever eating again. If he wants me here, I'll never leave.

Sherlock smiled softly as John took his seat and, quite surprisingly, calmed down. It made no sense to John. Why would Sherlock relax just because he'd refrained from leaving? Mycroft, as usual, was unreadable and offered no help. John settled in, and looked over to the elder Holmes, unsure of what to do or say next.

Thankfully for John, Mycroft did. "The speech therapist is scheduled for after lunch. The doctors want him to start trying to eat solid foods now that his ability to handle water has been established. There will be a special soft food diet for him. We have been given the choice of assisting him with eating, or if you'd rather, one of the

orderlies can. It's up to you. I did not want to make the decision for you, Doctor Watson."

The thought of some stranger trying to feed Sherlock sent a spike of possessive jealousy down John's spine. Hell, he wasn't even sure Sherlock would let anyone else touch him, with the way he'd reacted to the physical therapy.

"I think one of us should try. We can always call for help if we can't get it done."

Surprisingly, Mycroft seemed almost relieved. John was quite certain that Mycroft was feeling as overpoweringly protective as he was about Sherlock right now, when it came to anyone besides the bare minimum of hospital staff interacting with him. Sherlock needed less stress if he wanted to get better.

As John and Mycroft silently watched each other, a thought occurred to the doctor. They were sitting here, talking about Sherlock in front of him. It seemed that he understood most of what was going on. He responded to them earlier and had non verbally answered questions and worked with the therapist. But he didn't initiate conversation—the only exception being when he called for John when he was about to leave. For the most part, he sat there and simply watched them, looking as though he was listening intently.

He always did love to observe.

When Sherlock had settled down a bit, John turned to Mycroft. "I'm aware of the irony of what I'm about to say, because I've already done it, but I think we need to be mindful to not talk around Sherlock, like he's not in the room. I think that's frustrating him."

Mycroft looked at him like he had grown a third head. "I never had any intentions of doing so, Doctor Watson."

There he goes again, calling me 'Doctor Watson'. He always does

that when he's trying to be dismissive or condescending, or when he wants to end the conversation.

Only a few moments ago, Mycroft had been talking to him about meals and therapies, like Sherlock was some abstract concept and not the living, breathing man who sat between them. John sighed, and sank back in his chair, too tired to get into an argument with Mycroft about it right now, so he just let it go.

Little more was said after that. Sherlock dozed a little, still very tired from the physical therapy activities. Eventually, a Healthcare Assistant brought a lunch tray and put it on the pullout table across Sherlock's bed.

"William. Wake up. Your food is here. The doctors want you to try to eat a bit, okay?" Mycroft gently shook his brother's shoulder. Sherlock blinked a couple of times, his eyes still cloudy. Mycroft repeated what he had said. John watched the realization slowly wash over Sherlock, and he nodded softly.

"Would you like some help feeding him?" the assistant asked, patiently waiting as Mycroft used the bed remote to maneuver Sherlock into a sitting position.

"I think we'd like to try ourselves, if we can, thank you." It was about as polite as John had ever heard Mycroft speak.

"Okay. Call for a nurse if you need help." He turned around and left.

Mycroft dipped his spoon in the container, coming up with a small dollop of applesauce before he turned to John. "The nurse this morning instructed me to gently press the gauze on his neck while he eats." John nodded and ever so gently pressed the palm of his hand to the gauze. He could feel Sherlock's warm skin under the thin gauze.

Warm. He was alive.

"Okay, William. Open up." Sherlock opened his mouth

and, to his credit, did try to eat, but it ended up making him cough and spit up most of what went inside. But at least he was coughing. It meant he could protect his lungs. Of course, it could also mean that his swallowing reflex was not as functional as the doctors had originally thought. John quickly banished that thought.

Mycroft, showing an almost infinite amount of a parental-type patience that gobsmacked John, took a napkin and wiped his little brother's face.

"A good first attempt. Let's try again." The second attempt was somewhat more successful, some applesauce was actually swallowed. Eventually after a bit of trial and error, they figured out that it was all about timing, putting the food in his mouth as Sherlock was breathing in. This allowed him to take his time with swallowing without feeling out of breath.

Almost half an hour later, most of the applesauce was gone. Sherlock was starting to get antsy again. It hadn't taken long for John and Mycroft to notice a pattern. Whenever Sherlock got frustrated, restless, or tired, he'd grunt and fidget around, which he was currently doing now. Mycroft sighed. They could tell he'd reached the end of his patience, and were going to get no further cooperation out of him.

"Okay, William. We're done." Mycroft moved the food tray to a table off to the side and folded the bed table away, which immediately calmed Sherlock down.

Well, that could have gone a whole lot worse.

Now that the nasogastric tube was gone, Sherlock would still need additional nutrients through his IV for some time, but at least this meal was a start.

Sherlock was ever so slowly on the mend.

To be continued...



Fogtown. Art by Adán.

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. And... we are still in the process of settling into our current state as a free-membership society. Was that our status earlier in the year? Yes. Yes, it was. As it turns out, there can be *quite a lot of work* to do when you are making a massive paradigm shift *and* you have a big website.

“There has been some new development?”

“I had an answer to my advertisement.”

“Ah!”

“Yes, it came within a few minutes of your leaving.”

— THE GREEK INTERPRETER

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is still 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 experienced significant membership growth over the past few months. All other memberships have been renewed to the end of the year, and will be renewed again afterwards. If anyone has trouble logging into their account, please email selena@johnhwatsonsonociety.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 remain 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. The newsletter is still a goal, but the project is currently on-hold.

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@johnhwatsonsonociety.com to submit.

Digital (PDF) editions of all of our publications are available from the membership resources page: <https://www.johnhwatsonsonociety.com/member-resources/>. 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. April saw an initial, limited rollout of JHWS T-shirts, designed by Madeline and featuring our mascot and his Boswell. We hope to make the T-shirts broadly available to the membership in the coming year!

August saw the 12th Annual John H Watson Society Treasure Hunt, led once again by Rich Krisciunas (JHWS “Hector”). The highest-scoring US team had a perfect score of 192 submitted by the Sound of the Baskervilles, whose members were Margie Deck (JHWS “Mopsy”), Naching Kassa (JHWS “Sunshine”), Cameron Brandon, and Steve Mason (JHWS “Tex”). The international Team LaFayette from France, comprised of Anne du Ranquet, Aline Hinh, Sylvia Israel, Daniel Henocq, Thomas Leandre-Helbecque, and Thierry Saint-Joanis, BSI, scored 190 and missed one question which, arguably, may have been confused in translation. At the individual level, Mark Doyle (JHWS “Agent”) scored the highest internationally at 190 points, and Joanna Freeman scored the highest in the US at 188. More results can be found on our website at

johnhwatsonsociety.com/final-results-of-the-annual-treasure-hunt/.

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 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 June 30, 2024 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
January - June 2024

Opening Bank Balance 1/1/2024	\$5,093.07
Receipts	
Memberships	\$0.00
Previous Year Uncleared Deposits	\$0.00
Donations	\$0.00
Journals Ordered via Print-On-Demand	\$1.98
Interest Earned	\$0.16
Total Income	\$2.14
Expenses	
Web Hosting (2024)	\$367.87
Printing and Postage (<i>Watsonian</i> 2023)	\$1,253.70
Event Hosting	\$0.00
Government/Licensing Fees	\$0.00
PayPal/Square/Bank Fees	\$0.00
Total Expenses	\$1,621.57
Closing Bank Balance 06/30/2024	\$3,473.64

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”

4thelneyj0nes, JHWS “Alfred”, is a fan artist and illustrator based in California who has been drawing Sherlockian art for over a decade. He fell in love with Sherlock Holmes and its fandom through the BBC adaptation in 2012. Since then, his interest has expanded to include most Holmes adaptations, though he particularly loves when Holmes and Watson are pulled out of the Victorian era. Much of his work lately has focused on Sherlock and Co., though he still regularly creates for other adaptations and fandoms.

Adán is an Argentinian psychology student and artist whose silly obsession with Sherlock Holmes started as a simple little interest he had as a child— an interest that kept growing with every adaptation he found and every book he read. This obsession became a very important part of his life, sometimes taking over it completely. Thankfully, they could always rely on their artistic mind to, somehow, get the detective out of their head in the form of some sort of weird, queer cathartic release.

Bluebell of Baker Street, JWHS “Bunny”, inherited both her interest in Sherlock Holmes and her propensity for drawing stuff from her saintly mother. She is a retired teacher living in northern California, and has a husband, two kids, two cats and a lingering existential dread.

Johanna Draper Carlson, JHWS “Frida”, is a member of the Notorious Canary-Trainers of Madison, Wisconsin. She runs <http://ComicsWorthReading.com>, the longest-running independent comic review site, and founded <http://SherlockComics.com> in 2022. She believes that if John Watson had a more distinctive appearance, he'd qualify as a superhero.

El_on_Mars is a UK-based 20 year old hobby artist who mostly creates fanart and sometimes realist portraits. First introduced to Holmes through the Granada series at a young age by their father, they have since been fascinated about not only the original stories but also the wide variety of adaptations.

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 Teawear & 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.

Erica Fair is an attorney and amateur medical historian living in Minneapolis. She has been a member of the Norwegian Explorers since 2019, and has written an article for the scion's Christmas Annual each year since 2021, along with columns for the scion's newsletter, *Explorations*. She is a frequent Zoom meeting participant across the nation and recently passed the Fortescue Examination Tripos, offered by The Beacon Society. This is her first article for *The Watsonian*.

Alexian Gregory, JHWS “Darwin”, ASH, BSI, collects antique pocket watches. He revels in wearing his Victorian era exemplars. It’s as close to time-travel as he can get.

Alfredo Hamil, JHWS “Anstruther”, 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").

Abril Iñiguez is a writer by passion, with a master's degree on computer engineering by sheer willpower. She is currently living in Mexico, along with her mother and her four cats.

Rob Nunn, JHWS “Beacon”, ASH, BSI, is the Gasogene of The Parallel Case of St. Louis and a member of many other Sherlockian groups as well as serving as Head Light of The Beacon Society. He is the co-editor of *The Finest Assorted Collection and Canonical Cornerstones* with Peter Eckrich and *The Monstrum Opus of Sherlock Holmes* with

Brad Keefauver and is the author of *The Criminal Mastermind of Baker Street* and two volumes of *The Common-Place Book*. His interviews with fellow Sherlockians can be found on his blog, “Interesting Though Elementary”. Rob is a fifth grade teacher in Edwardsville, IL where he lives with his wife, Amy, and daughter, Savannah.

Rich 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.

Shai Porter, JHWS “Evidently Harmless”, 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.

Victiore G. Rios, JHWS “Vic” is a Colombian born artist who lives in the Netherlands. They are currently studying animation, and hope to bring at least one Sherlock Holmes Animated Adaptation to theatres once they've graduated. They are passionate about adaptations that depict different cultures, and have fallen head over heels for modern adaptations like *Sherlock & Co.*, or queerer analyses such as *Watson's Sketchbook* (Molly Knox Ostertag) and *My Dearest Holmes* (Rohase Piercy).

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>.

Austin Shay, JHWS “Jay” is an IT professional by day and book reviewer by night. He holds an MA in Humanities from Penn State and is finishing his MPS in Sexual Health from the University of Minnesota. He lives in Pennsylvania with his husband and two dogs

Rita Smith, JHWS “Pearl”, has been a Sherlockian since her mother read *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* to her 7-year-old self at bedtime. She is a librarian by trade and a storyteller by vocation. Her other work can be found on AO3 under mom2boys and in the anthology *When the Rose Speaks Its Name*, published by Shield and Crescent Press.

SpectralChicken (she/her) is the pen-name for a Mid-Western United States woman who has always been a bit ridiculous. She is now past the age of caring if everyone else knows it too. Enjoying her recent plunge into the Sherlock fandom, she is absorbing tropes like a sponge and is turning them all into various forms of poetry or music lyrics. She lives with her husband, two teen boys, two cats, and one goofy Golden Retriever.

Dr. John H. Watson, JHWS “Teddy”, is a retired professional photographer (Johnny Watson Photography) who lives in Columbus, Georgia. He is a real person, not a Victorian character, and not a medical doctor.

G. Benjamin White was introduced to Sherlock Holmes by his father. He currently lives in Taiwan and teaches English at China Medical University (Taiwan). whitegben@yahoo.com

Aloïs Wood, JHWS “Alger”, 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 Circlet 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.



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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.

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