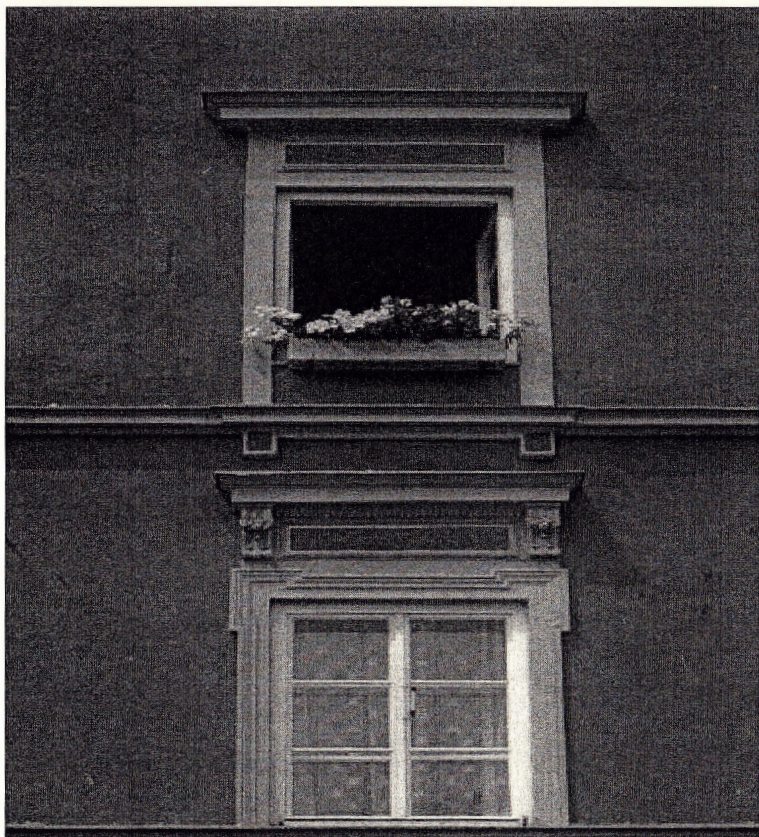


Another Exciting Sherlockian Round-Robin Pastiche by
Members of The Pleasant Places of Florida



City Ablaze

-2001/2004-

Contributing Authors

Introduction: Wanda Dow

Continuation 1: Neil Harvey

Continuation 2: Caroline Everett

Continuation 3: Carl Heifetz

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All of the above are members of The Pleasant Places of Florida, a “certified” Scion of the Baker Street Irregulars. The PPoF was founded in 1972 by Leslie Marshall, B.S.I. (“A Scandal in Bohemia”). Current Officers are David McCallister, Carl Heifetz, Mike Bryan, Jeff Dow, and Wanda Dow. Dr. Benton Wood is Recorder Emeritus.

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Pleasant Places of Florida

CITY ABLAZE

Introduction

by Wanda Dow



It was a withering hot August day as Dr. John H. Watson sat in the window seat at 221B squinting out at the good citizens of the great city of London. Everyone moved about in slow motion as if any attempt in speed would increase the already rising mercury. Even the horses pulling the few hansoms on the street took their time

and their drivers were too overcome with the heat to whip them into creating a breeze for their passengers.

He could not decide if he should close the window and draw the drapes against the sun or leave it open in the hopes of catching any vestige of a waft of air. He also was considering the propriety of the removal of as many articles of clothing as possible in an attempt to decrease his own temperature when a light tap sounded at the door.

"Come in!" he called, stepping away from the window.

Mrs. Hudson entered, hat in one hand and fan in another.

"Oh, Dr. Watson!" she panted, "I don't think I've ever experienced the heat quite like this. There's no relief to be found! I've prepared some cold meats for your dinner this evening if you wouldn't mind fetching them yourself from the kitchen. I must go to the aid of my dear friend Molly Umpstead who's with a fever on top of all this heat, poor dear. Her husband just sent a boy 'round to ask for my help in tending her as he's been up for nearly forty-eight hours, changing the cloths on her forehead and such. I hope you don't mind..."

"Of course not, dear lady," Watson assured her. "Is there anything I can do? Would you like me to see her?"

"That's very nice of you," Mrs. Hudson shook her head. "But her doctor has said there is nothing that can be done but that she get through the fever on her own."

"Very well," Watson sighed, taking out a handkerchief to wipe his face, "But please send for me if you need any assistance. I shall be happy to help."

"Thank you sir," Mrs. Hudson smiled. "I'll just be going then." She hesitated at the door, as if debating about something, then turned back to him. "If you don't mind my suggesting it, doctor, but the heat is something fierce. You might consider taking a book and candle down to the cellar and spending a few hours there. It's a bit musty and dark, but it's cooler. I must confess I've made several trips there this morning myself."

Watson smiled, "Why thank you, Mrs. Hudson. I could think of no better escape myself."

With her conscience cleared, she exited.

Watson went to the desk drawer and pulled out a candle and matches, then picked up the book that was by his chair and started out the door when he thought better of it and stopped. He went back to close the window and write a quick note to Holmes, who had gone out much earlier in the day. Before he headed down the stairs, he stuffed the book and candles in his pockets and picked up one of the light chairs in the hallway. Just as he headed towards the kitchen, there was a knock at the door.

He sighed. He considered continuing to the cellar and pretending he had not heard the caller, but in all good conscience he could not. He set down the chair and went to the door.

On the step stood an elderly gentleman, tall of stature with an air of superiority about him. His shockingly white hair was thick and brushed back, and his aquiline face possessed two of the sharpest, bluest eyes Watson had ever seen. With him was a young lady, dressed in beiges, a veiled hat pulled over her light brown hair and covering her face. For a moment, the three of them stood staring at each other.

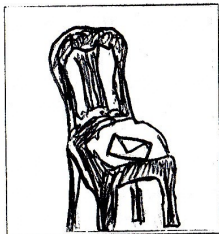
Watson finally broke the silence by clearing his throat. "I'm sorry, but if you've come to see Mr. Holmes, he is unavailable at this time." He glanced behind them and could see that a carriage awaited the two.

"On the contrary," the man replied, smiling as he extended his hand, "it is you, Dr. Watson, for whom we have called."

Watson took the hand, frowning. "I...?" he said, then started at the slight pin prick he felt on his palm. He stared down at his hand, watching it as it loomed farther and farther away from his arm.

The man stepped forward and deftly caught the good doctor as he collapsed in the doorway. Quickly he drug Watson to the awaiting carriage as the woman stepped in, left an envelope on the table, and exited, closing the door quietly behind her.

In seconds, the carriage was gone, the only witness to the doctor's disappearance, a lone chair sitting in the middle of the foyer.



Continuation 1

by Neil Harvey

Sherlock Holmes arrived at Baker Street to be greeted at the door by a frantic Mrs. Hudson. "Mr. Holmes, something terrible must have happened to Dr. Watson," she cried. "When I returned from my visit to Molly Umpstead's," she continued, "I found the lunch I had left for Dr. Watson was untouched and he was no place to be found in the house."

Sherlock Holmes put his arm around Mrs. Hudson replying, "Now, now dear lady perhaps you are jumping to unlikely conclusions." Holmes escorted Mrs. Hudson to a chair in the sitting room and inquired, "Has anybody called this morning before you left on your visit?"

"No, Mr. Holmes, nobody."

"I see," replied Holmes, as he gazed about the entrance hall way to the

house. "I found this curious cuff link on the front step just now, it is clear to me someone has recently called here," Holmes replied.

"Oh yes, Mr. Holmes, there was a letter left on that chair in the foyer. It is addressed to you, Sir," stammered Mrs. Hudson as she handed the envelope to Holmes.

Holmes quickly read the note contained in the envelope. His practiced expression did not reveal to Mrs. Hudson the sinister content of the message.

"Oh well now, nothing to be alarmed about, dear lady," quipped Holmes. "I say, would you be so kind as to brew me a pot of tea? I think I shall help myself to the lunch you put out and then it is off to collect my good friend Dr. Watson."

After his lunch at Baker street and a comforting pat on Mrs. Hudson's shoulder, Holmes quickly left to see his brother Mycroft at the Diogenes Club. Holmes and Mycroft next proceeded to pay a call on Sir Patrick Overbrook, Superintendent of London's Criminal Investigation Department. Sir Patrick was the very able and respected director of all London's police affairs as well as a confidant of the Queen and the inner circle of the Prime Minister.

Overbrook immediately admitted Mycroft and Holmes to his elegant office, seating them with an offering of very good sherry and cigars. Mycroft, as well as his famous detective brother, was well known to Overbrook .

"Gentlemen, I am honored," said Overbrook when all were comfortably settled. "Although I must say," he continued, "seeing you here causes me some concern." He chuckled nervously. "Knowing of your reputations, should I assume this is not a social call?"

"Quite right," replied Holmes. "Please be so good, Sir Patrick, as to read this note. I fear my associate and good friend Dr. Watson has fallen into dire straits and Mycroft and I are determined to rescue him with your permission and assistance."

Sir Patrick intently read the note. "Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "Your friend may indeed be doomed. Mr. Holmes, this note suggests that you have been privately investigating the Whitechapel murders and this 'Ripper' business and your friend Dr. Watson is being held hostage until you cease your investigations."

"You have the dilemma precisely, Sir Patrick," commented Mycroft. "You and I both know" he continued, "the Queen expects this fiend's apprehension immediately. This dirty work has London ablaze with civil unrest."

"By all means gentlemen," exclaimed Sir Patrick, "My office is at your service. What would you have me do?"



Continuation 2

by Caroline Everett

Gradually Dr. Watson became aware of his surroundings. It took him a few minutes to remember what had happened to him—the white-haired gentleman had drugged him! Aware of a throbbing head, he found himself lying on a velveteen couch in an apartment distinguished for its elegant furnishings. A gilded chair stood by an equally impressive desk in front of a tall window that

presented a magnificent view of London from some stories up.

With an effort, Watson got to his feet and, remembering the methods of his friend Sherlock Holmes, proceeded to examine the room. The desk, while not revealing the name of its owner, yielded a surprise. The stationary upon it was embossed with the words "Buckingham Palace"!

Suddenly the panelled door opened and the white-haired man entered.

"Ah, Dr. Watson, I see you have recovered! I'm sorry I had to drug you but discretion and secrecy are of the utmost importance in this matter. Allow me to introduce myself: I am Sir Whitby Ruggleston, unofficial private secretary to Her majesty the Queen. I brought you here, not for a ransom as I wrote in a letter to Sherlock Holmes, but to consult you as a medical man. I know Holmes to be investigating the horrible crimes in Whitechapel, committed by a man who has had at least a rudimentary surgical education. The Queen knows the person responsible for these atrocities. What's more, you know him as well from medical school!"

Watson overcame his shock at these words and replied, "Sir Whitby, why are not Sherlock or Mycroft Holmes or even Sir Patrick Overbrook informed of this?"

"They will be if necessary," said Sir Whitby. "Now the fewer people aware of this potentially devastating scandal the better. I will inform Sherlock Holmes that you are safe however, while you give me what help you can."

Grudgingly, Watson agreed. "But first, who is this person you and Her Majesty are shielding?"

"Pray be seated and I will tell you all."

Watson sat in a velvet chair and listened with incredulity to Sir Whitby's revelations.



Continuation 3

by Carl Heifetz

Sherlock Holmes and his older brother, Mycroft, sat quietly across from each other at the spacious shining, dark Tudor table in the 'Strangers Room' at Mycroft Holmes' club, the mysterious Diogenes. Although it was an area in which speaking was allowed, both quietly sipped at their Havana cigars, perusing the three objects laid before them—the only clues to Dr. Watson's site of imprisonment.

They reviewed a hastily scribbled note on a small printed prescription blank bearing the name John H. Watson, M.D. on the top followed by a large Rx indicating the nature of the paper. Under this was a scrawled, in a typical physician's hand writing, "I will be cooling off in the cellar with a good book and a pipeful of Ships. Please call me when you arrive so that we share a cold supper."

Next was a carefully penned note on a quarter sheet of paper that stated: "My Dear Mr. Sherlock Holmes, you are on a dangerous quest. Break it off without delay if you want to ever set eyes on your colleague in the future. The 'Ripper Affair' is official government business." The note was signed "W."

The third item was a very interesting cuff link. It was a leafy design in gold bearing an inscribed "W" over a large, glistening emerald.

"You will find nothing of value in the doctor's note, my dear younger brother," said Mycroft, at last. "The handwriting tells us that Dr. Watson was unaware of impending danger. He fully expected to meet with you upon your return to Baker Street. Otherwise, we can wring nothing out of it."

"Yes, Mycroft, you are probably right," replied the thinner brother. "But, we can infer that Watson's kidnapper took him by surprise immediately after he wrote this missive since, otherwise, he would have been out of harm's way in the cellar. Mrs. Hudson's emotional account indicated that she left the house in the early afternoon. Once we have a suspect, we can query him concerning his whereabouts during that time."

"I'm afraid that you are putting the cart before the horse since we are far from finding any suspects. I suggest that we concentrate on the other two clues," countered Mycroft Holmes.

The more energetic brother quickly swept up the quarter sheet and held it towards the light streaming in the window. Then, he carefully examined it with his powerful hand lens.

He then spoke: "This paper is from a highly placed person in the queen's inner circle. He has an excellent education—public school followed by Oxford or Cambridge. He is no doubt English, and is used to having his wishes promptly obeyed."

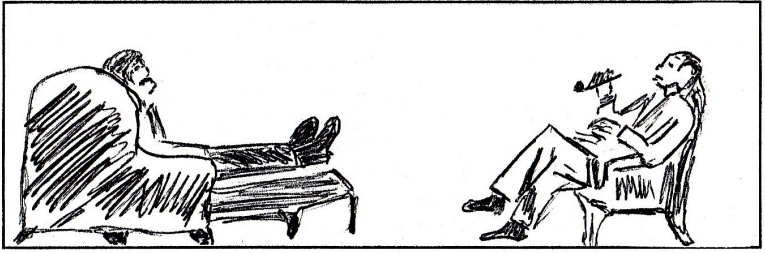
"Yes. I agree completely," responded the elder brother. "The fact that the paper is very expensive and of high rag content, as well as the beautiful royal blue ink, spells money. The small 'VR' in the water mark obviously shows that it came from Queen Victoria's personal supply. The beautiful penmanship and proper use of grammar indicate an excellent education. Finally, the strong, masculine hand and lordly tenor of the note bespeaks a man who is used to being obeyed. In addition, I read yet another fact from the missive."

"What could that be?" queried Sherlock Holmes.

"The person is not accustomed to subterfuge and does not have an official position within the British government. Note that although he used a quarter sheet of paper to eliminate the tell-tale return address of the official residence of the Queen, he did not have the foresight to realize what the watermark would tell us. Also, he did not have official departmental stationery at hand to use as a regular government employee would have."

"Quickly then, let us go in search of a highly placed member of the Queen's inner circle with the initial 'W' as indicated by the note who is missing an expensive emerald cuff link!" expostulated Sherlock Holmes.

"No, not I," wearily replied Mycroft Holmes. "It is your proclivity to run around interviewing people and searching out malefactors. I am quite worn out by all of this activity. You know there are but three names that it can be. I will retreat to the comfort of the members' room, enjoy a sherry or two with some biscuits and further reflect on the problem. Farewell, Sherlock, and good hunting."



Conclusion

by Jeffery F. Dow

“How fantastic,” murmured Watson as he leaned back in his chair. It was not until then, at the end of Sir Whitby’s incredible story, that he realized he was bathed in sweat. “How is—” he cleared his throat—“how is the Royal Family, uhh, well, how are they—”

“As well as can be expected, Dr. Watson. They have escaped the ghastly heat of the city by vacationing to Windsor Castle. No doubt the recent events have also contributed to their decision to go on holiday.”

Watson stared at the front of the desk, ran a finger up and down the lapel of his jacket. He knew he must ask it, but he did not wish to.

“What is it—what is it that you wish me to do?”

“Talk to him. Convince Dr. Gull to leave England. Convince Her Majesty’s surgeon that he must think of the greater good. Convince him to leave and never return.”

“I hardly think, after all this, that he—that he is at all going to listen to me. Can’t you send him away? Can’t you...well...” Watson’s voice trailed off.

“Her majesty will allow no harm to come to him. And we have spoken to her at length about the situation. When we first suspected him, we did send him to the continent and he was gone for several months. But then he returned. And we fear that he will strike again. Please, Dr. Watson, you owe it to him—you owe it to your country to perform this service.” Sir Whitby leaned forward, his hands on the desk, nearly rising out of his chair.

Watson sighed, running a hand through his hair. He knew Ruggleston was right, that he owed the Royal Family a few minutes of his time.

“Very well,” he said. “Bring him to me. I will talk to him.”

“I am sorry, Dr. Watson, but we must go see him.”

“Is he vacationing with Her Majesty?”

“I am afraid not. He has secured lodgings in the West End under an assumed name.”

“How on earth could you allow—?”

“Dr. Gull has his own ways, Dr. Watson. Her Majesty will not allow us to interfere with the surgeon’s life. We have counseled her on numerous occasions but she will not listen. Dr. Gull must make his own decisions.”

“Very well,” Watson said again, quite wearily. “I will see him.”

“Thank you, Dr. Watson. You do not know how much Her Majesty—how

much we all appreciate what you are doing.”

Watson managed a wan smile as he stood and followed Sir Whitby out the door and down the corridors of Buckingham Palace.

Holmes left the “Stranger’s Room” and obtained a cab. As he sat down, his leg was jabbed by something in his pocket. Reaching in, he extracted the cuff link, looked at it briefly and started to slip it into his shirt pocket. But as he did so, his fingers played across the portion of the cuff link that turned perpendicular to the stem. He pulled the piece of jewelry out, examining it more closely.

The gold glinted in the subdued light of the cab, the “W” hanging heavily over the emerald. But it wasn’t the front of the cuff link that captured Holmes’ attention. He pushed on the tab in the shape of a block letter “D” at the other end. It turned only with great difficulty.

And yet it was parallel to the stem when we found it, Holmes mused. It would hardly have turned of its own accord. And if it were straight to begin with, it would have fallen out long before the owner reached Baker Street.

How could I have missed that? Holmes thought now. How could I have been so stupid? The cufflink had *deliberately* been left behind!

With the carriage still moving, Holmes opened the door, stuck his head out and yelled at the driver, “Buckingham Palace, and a sovereign if you get there within ten minutes.”

Watson sat in a chair in a small room. The cottage was dark and smelled heavily of cologne, almost to the point that it made him gag. Consisting of four rooms, the small house was located on a short road just off of Cable Street in Whitechapel.

He had followed Sir Whitby through a deserted Palace and out into the courtyard. From there they left the compound, walked across the street and entered a black cab, Ruggleston saying, “You’ll understand if we do not take an official conveyance.”

Watson was quite reticent during the entire trip. How could this man have fallen so low? Watson mused. True, he had had only one class with the surgeon and what little time he had spent with the doctor convinced him that the man was aloof and arrogant. Still, to go from the Queen’s surgeon to such an ignominious end was beyond Watson. What could I possibly say to him, Watson thought now. Invoking the Hippocratic Oath would hardly work at this point, he concluded. Whitby seemed to know what he was thinking, as he leaned over and whispered conspiratorially, “You have carte blanche to offer him anything.”

The closer they came to Whitechapel, the more Watson found himself sinking farther and farther into the seat, as if he were shrinking away from the world and the task to which he had agreed to perform.

The cab had pulled up to the end of the street and the two gentlemen got out. Reaching the single story house, Whitby had knocked on the door several times. Finally he turned the knob and entered, Watson behind him.

They waited for a good half hour, Whitby looking very uncomfortable.

Watson had to step outside several times to escape the overwhelming odor of cologne.

"Dr. Gull enjoys the smell," Ruggleston explained.

Finally, the royal advisor looked at his watch and said, "I must return to the residence. I am sure that the good doctor will be here soon."

"Please stay a bit longer," Watson said.

"I am sure that you can introduce yourself. You will have much to talk about."

"But I—"

"I really must return. I have some very pressing engagements. I shall send a cab for you within an hour. Please take it even if Dr. Gull has not arrived.

"Sir Whitby, I—"

"Dr. Watson," Ruggleston said turning around at the door, "Her Majesty is indebted to you."

And so Dr. Watson had returned to the chair. Every ten minutes or so he had to open the door to get some fresh air. He hoped that his suit would not smell like this for the rest of his life.

As the evening wore on, Watson located some matches and lit two of the candles in the front room. He watched the flames flicker, then went outside to escape the cologne.

When he returned, he took up the candleholder and explored the small house. The kitchen had a pot-bellied stove, a wooden cutting board and a sink. A door lead into a bedroom containing a small bed, a bureau and a tall armoire. A second door on the far side of the room lead into another room that had a desk with a chair on wheels. There were books and papers in complete disarray on the desk. In the dim light, Watson gave the room his best examination, tried to employ Holmes' methods of deduction to determine some of Dr. Gull's habits. But he was tired and irritated and decided against any detailed investigation

Upon returning to the first bedroom, Watson noticed a dark stain on the armoire just below the door. Curious, he approached the piece of furniture, noticed that the cologne was particularly pungent. He held the candle close to the stain, saw that it was glossy, saw that it seemed to move. In the yellow light, it looked almost black but as he bent closer, he saw that it had a reddish hue to it.

No, he thought, standing up and opening the door. He glimpsed a woman's face just before it pitched forward, striking him in the chest. Watson fell backwards, dropped the candle, extinguishing the flame.

"Good God," Watson murmured, gasping for breath. He pushed the form off of him. It thudded horribly against the wooden floor. Getting to his knees, Watson felt for a pulse, touched cool skin at her wrist. He knew she was dead, and did not even press on her artery. He breathed through his mouth, swallowed and stood. Even in the darkness he could see that the woman's torso had been slashed horribly. Turning away, he leaned against the doorjamb, tried to catch his breath. He glanced at the face and even in the darkness he could make out minor details. She looked familiar. She looked—

"No," Watson groaned, recognizing her as the woman who had

accompanied Sir Whitby to his flat on Baker Street. Watson bolted for the door.

Once outside, he ambled to the fence, was about to call out for help when a hand grabbed his arm.

"Let me go," Watson said trying to push the man away.

"Come wit' me," the cockney accent replied.

"I must—"

"Come wit' me or I'll 'ave to kill ya now."

Just as Watson allowed the man to drag him away from the house, he heard the pounding of horse's hooves.

"Wait," Watson said trying to pull free, "it is the police. I must—"

"Nao, Dr. Watson," the voice said, and was followed by the clicking of a gun.

Watson allowed himself to be hauled down the street. In moments, police were swarming up the street, surrounding the house that he had just left. His assailant pushed him around the corner and into a dark alley.

"Put this on," a different voice said. Watson felt a piece of cloth thrust into his hands.

"What—?"

"Please, Watson, do as I say. There will be time enough for questions later."

"Holmes?"

"Yes, Watson, and you are in grave danger. Put the jacket on. And button it all the way up."

Watson absently slipped the coat on, secured it up to the top button.

"Now, I want you to return straight to Baker Street. Do not stop for anyone. Do not talk to anyone."

"But Holmes, I have just seen—"

"I am very aware of what you have just seen. And I pray that you will be able to forget it. Now."

And with that, Holmes pushed Watson out of the alley and back into the street.

"You there," yelled a policeman, "stop." He shined a dark lantern on the two.

"I am Sherlock Holmes, and this is Dr. Watson."

"Oh, Mr. Holmes," the policeman said. "You heard about the 'Ripper.'"

"I feared as much," Holmes said looking at Watson.

Watson gasped again, stumbled.

"Are you all right, sir?"

"Yes, thank you," Watson said.

"You won't mind if I join the investigation, Watson?"

"No, no, not at all." Watson wiped perspiration from his forehead.

Holmes joined the policeman.

"Were you doin' some of your own investigatin', Mr. Holmes?"

"You could say that."

"Well, we've found somethin'."

The two walked down to the cottage.

Watson followed them, edged past what appeared to be half of Scotland Yard assembled in the front yard of the cottage. He placed his hands over the lapels of his jacket, walked to the next street. It took him a while before he was able to locate a cab. He rode it all the way back to Baker Street, hurried up the steps to his apartment. Closing the door, he leaned against it.

When he felt able, he walked to the couch, sat down heavily, his jacket still on, despite the warmth of the room. He kept seeing the image of the woman's body tumble out of the armoire. Her head had flopped back and forth as if her throat had been severed. And the awful sound that it had made when he pushed her off of him. Dear God, who could do such a thing?

Holmes did not return until late, and all that time Watson sat on the couch in the dark, unmoving. He had seen men killed in battle while he was with the Fusiliers, and he had witnessed atrocities while working with Holmes. But he had never seen anything to rival the gruesomeness of this crime.

And indeed, it took Holmes a while before he was composed enough to speak to Watson. He changed his clothes, slipping into his robe and slippers and took up his pipe after lighting the lamp. His sigh was enough to tell Watson that the entire evening had been very difficult for him as well.

"The cottage was surprisingly devoid of clues," he finally said. "And not just because the Scotland Yarders got there first."

"Holmes, how could anyone—what—how is it possible—?"

"It is beyond my ken, Watson. I can tell you that someone has committed a crime, but I often cannot tell you why. In this case, however, I can tell you why."

"The 'Ripper'? You know why—?"

"It was not the 'Ripper,'" Holmes said shaking his head. "It was supposed to be you."

"What?"

"They needed you to trust them implicitly. And what better way than to make you think you were assisting Her Royal Majesty?"

"But I was in Buckingham Palace. I walked through the halls. I looked out through their windows."

"I have no doubt that you did, Watson. I must have just missed you. But the people to whom you were speaking were not employed by the Royal Family."

"Not the—?"

"They needed you to trust them implicitly. I was too cautious. I missed something I should not have." Holmes was silent for a moment, his mouth twisting into a frown. He looked up at Watson, said, "You were abducted probably because they were unsure that you would believe them. The Royal Family was conveniently out of London. Once inside Buckingham Palace you would believe anything, even that someone close to the Family was responsible for the Whitechapel murders. They enlisted your help. You were to talk this person into leaving the country. They delivered you to the cottage at which this person supposedly lived. After they were certain that you would be there, they alerted the police. If you had not come out of

the house when you had, you would have been arrested for the murder of that poor woman.”

Watson leaned forward, put his elbows on his knees, his head in his hands and rubbed his eyes. “How could I have been such a fool,” he muttered.

“You are not to blame, Watson. They took extraordinary precautions, went to unimaginable lengths. I could admire their efforts if it were not for the heinous nature of the crime committed.”

“But why would they want to have *me* arrested for murder, Holmes?”

“It is not you they were after, Watson. It was *me*.”

“You?”

“If you were arrested, charged and convicted of murder, then my name would be sullied as well. To have harbored a criminal of such magnitude and to have had absolutely no idea would have been so damaging that my life as a detective would be over.”

“Who would want to do such a thing?”

“Indeed.”

“And how would they know that I would discover the body? How would they know that?”

“I suspect that they hoped you would but it would not be damaging if you did not. It would be enough that Scotland Yard found you in the same West End cottage with a deceased female.”

“But the girl. She was with the man who kidnapped me.”

“An unfortunate victim, performing a simple, although illegal, task in order to pay off a debt.”

Watson sat up, looked at Holmes and said, “How did you discover all this?”

“Nearly too late. I had made certain suppositions that suddenly became very tenuous. When I realized my error, I dispatched Wiggins and the Irregulars to Whitechapel. I told them to look for you and to let me know as soon as they did. The very thing that they used to keep the body a secret was your salvation.”

“The cologne,” Watson said in sudden realization.

“It was still overwhelming while I was there. When I received the Irregulars’ message I got there as quickly as I could. I am sorry to have used such ill-mannered methods, but I knew the Yard’s arrival was imminent and I needed your utmost cooperation.”

“You undoubtedly saved my life, Holmes.”

Holmes waved his fingers in the air, frowned.

“If you deduced that these murderers were after you, have you deduced who they are?”

“An organization that has contacts in the highest branches of government. A network of willing conspirators who have no need for morality. A syndicate with only one purpose. There can be no mistake, Watson. It is Professor Moriarty.”

"But he is not behind the 'Ripper' murders?"

"No, Watson, I am afraid he is not."

"And it is not Dr. Gull?" Watson wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"Oh, dear no."

"Then who is?"

"We may never know, Watson. We may never know."

Despite the heat, despite his jacket, Watson shivered.



Previous "Round-Robin" Pastiches by The Pleasant Places of Florida

1. **The Case of the Foreign Cabman** (1975) [Leslie Marshall, Joy Mitchell, Tom Mitchell, Tom Reesor, Wanda Butts & Paul Gunning]
2. **The Case of the Lost L's** (1976) [Leslie Marshall, Mike Carroll, Marvin Norton, Charles Saunders, & Harry Seigrist]
3. **The Adventure of the Second Stein** (1977) [John Fought, Ben Wood, Mike Carroll, Ed Morgan, Joy Mitchell & Tom Mitchell]
4. **The Singular Adventure of the Solitary Balloonist** (1977) [Tom Reesor, Herman Herst, Ben Wood, Caroline Everett, Mike Carroll & Tom Mitchell]
5. **The Curious Affair of the Witch's Brougham** (1978) [Herman Herst, Svend Petersen, Paul Gunning, Wanda Butts, & Mike Carroll]
6. **The Adventure of the Florid Ians** (1979) [Mike Carroll, Caroline Everett, Helen Swift, Bill Ward & Wanda Butts]
7. **The Case Of The Three Merry Debs** (1980) [George Tullis, Helen Swift, Bill Ward, Caroline Everett & Wanda Butts]
8. **The Adventure of the Bar's Clue Bungle** (1982) [Ben Wood, Mike Bryan, Helen Swift, John Kalajian, Wanda Butts, Caroline Everett, Marsha Pollak & Mike Carroll]
9. **The Adventure of the Pale Ontologist** (1987) [Stephanie Rapp, George Tullis, John Fought, David McCallister & Caroline Everett]
10. **The Adventure of the Doc Croaker's Dirk** (1991) [Ben

Wood, David McCallister, John Kalajian, Duane Damon, Judy Buddle & Jeff Dow]

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