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Dramatic Publishing

THE
DEATH AND LIFE
OF



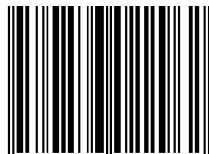
SHERLOCK
HOLMES

By SUZAN
ZEDER

THE DEATH AND LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

Mystery. By Suzan L. Zeder. Cast: 5m., 3w., with doubling, or up to 13 (8m., 5w.). *The Death and Life of Sherlock Holmes* is a mystery within a mystery! It is an action adventure with all the intrigues of a Sherlock Holmes investigation and a touch of Pirandello! This original play by Suzan L. Zeder weaves together characters and incidents from some of Arthur Conan Doyle's best-loved stories and gives them a new twist, as the world's greatest consulting detective matches wits with Doyle's most cunning villains, including: Colonel Sebastian Moran, Dr. Grimsby Roylott and, of course, Professor Moriarty. Non-stop action carries the plot through murder and mayhem right up to a stunning climax at the very edge of Reichenbach Falls as it explores the complex love-hate relationship between Sherlock Holmes and the man who created him. *Multiple locations for setting featuring special effects. Period costumes. Approximate running time: 2 hours. Code: DB2.*

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The Life and Death of
Sherlock Holmes



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The Death and Life of Sherlock Holmes

By
SUZAN L. ZEDER

Based upon the stories of
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle



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COVER ART WORK

by

THEODORE T. WOOD

originally created

for

**The Saint Louis University
Theatre Production**

Dedication

*This One,
at last,*

FOR MY FATHER

From the Playwright

Writing a play is a bit like solving a mystery. The first clue comes as an idea, a character, or a concept. As it is shaped in draft after draft, more clues are found. The play develops like a photograph: images are clarified, themes are sharply etched, and meanings emerge out of action. In each production, the play is further shaped by directors and designers; it is brought to life by actors, and is given whatever relevance it has in the hearts and minds of audiences. Each creative force makes a contribution, each supplies a special part of the puzzle. But finally the play begins to speak in its own voice, a voice that is louder and more articulate than any combination of the voices of all of us who made it. As time goes on, the play will have its own life; it will breathe with its own power; it will move with an energy far greater than all of our energies combined.

Writing this play has been like creating a puzzle without knowing exactly how to solve it. At its heart is a sometimes terrible, sometimes tender, always tentative relationship between creator and creation. Virtually every plot element, and character can be traced either to the Sherlock Holmes stories or the life of Arthur Conan Doyle, but the pieces have been put together in a new way. It has been my task to weave Doyle's words and my own, Doyle's characters and my motivations, Doyle's thoughts and my conflicts, into a tapestry that is neither an adaptation nor a biography, but a new creation respectful of its sources and mindful of its heritage. Finding the correct balance of mystery, psychology, and structure has been a continuing challenge.

I am grateful to Moses Goldberg of Stage One: The Louisville Children's Theatre and to Kathleen Collins of the Fulton Opera House, for commissioning this work. It has been an exciting, slightly dangerous mystery for my characters and for me, for I found myself, a bit like Doyle, looking back over all the plays I have written and wondering if I created them or they created me? If I have done my job well, people will remember the plays and the characters who dwell within them long after they have forgotten the color of my hair or the sound of my voice. This is as it should be, but it does make you wonder what and who is real after all.

Suzan Zeder
Tampa
1989

The Death and Life of Sherlock Holmes was co-commissioned by Stage One: The Louisville Children's Theatre, Louisville, Kentucky and the Fulton Opera House, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The first Production opened in February, 1987 at Stage One, with the following cast:

Sherlock Holmes	Bain Boehlke
Dr. John Watson	Rick Munger
Arthur Conan Doyle	Andy Backer
Mary Doyle	Pamela White
Wiggins	Bonnie Akimoto
Mrs. Hudson, Madame Bergolia	Breton Frazier
Officer Hopkins, Messenger	Steve Wise
Inspector Lestrade, Zoltan	William Groth

This production was directed by Moses Goldberg.

The second production opened in January, 1988 at the Fulton Opera House, with the following cast:

Sherlock Holmes	Steven Crossley
Dr. John Watson	Robertson Carricart
Arthur Conan Doyle	Orson Bean
Mary Doyle	Holly Felton
Wiggins	Shelley Delaney
Mrs. Hudson, Madame Bergolia	Ann Hillary
Officer Hopkins, Messenger	Gary Smith
Inspector Lestrade, Zoltan	Ian D. Shupeck

The production was directed by Kathleen Collins.

CHARACTERS

Sherlock Holmes:

Blind Beggar (Disguise)

Clergyman (Disguise)

Dr. John Watson:

Sir Charles Altamont (Disguise)

Mary Doyle

Mary Altamont

Arthur Conan Doyle:

Colonel Sebastian Moran (Disguise)

Dr. Grismby Roylott (Disguise)

Professor Moriarty (Disguise)

Mrs. Hudson

Lady of the Street*

Wiggins

Orphan Girl (Disguise)

Inspector Lestrade

Drunk (Disguise)

John Clay*

Officer Hopkins

Swiss Messenger*

Characters playing other roles in disguise are indicated above.

* Characters which may be played by the same actor are grouped together. If a larger cast is desired, these roles may be played by different actors.

SCENES

Act One

London Street: (Baker St. Window, Study, and Empty Room also visible.)

Windlesham, The Study

221B Baker Street

Windlesham, The Study

221B Baker Street

Stoke Morgan, Mary's Bedroom

Act Two

221B Baker Street

London Street

221B Baker Street

Before the Ascent to Reichenbach Falls

The Promontory of Reichenbach Falls

The desk seen at the top of the show and incorporated into the study at Windlesham should never leave the stage, but may be moved to far stage left or right.

It is suggested that projections of the original illustrations from the serialized stories be incorporated into the design; either as backdrops or as a transitional device between the scenes accompanying Watson's narrations. Wherever possible, specific illustrations are suggested.

TIME

March, 1893

The Death and Life of Sherlock Holmes

By Suzan L. Zeder

ACT ONE

Scene I

AT RISE: The sound of Big Ben tolling midnight. Spotlight comes up on a small area downstage. DOYLE huddles over the desk, scribbling. He works feverishly as music begins and lights come up on the rest of the stage:

An exterior of a London Street on a foggy night in 1893.

Music of a hurdy-gurdy and a violin are heard.

On either side of the stage are two-story structures.

Stage left: the facade of a London row house with a practical door. Above is a second-story casement window with a wide ledge and a drain pipe leading to the street below.

Stage right: 221 BAKER STREET features a second-floor bow window. The shades are pulled; behind them we see the familiar silhouette of SHERLOCK HOLMES. The windows of the two buildings face each other.

Center stage: a street lamp flickers. Nearby is a large rubbish bin or rain barrel.

On the street, a BLIND BEGGAR turns the crank of a hurdy-gurdy. A police whistle is heard. WIGGINS enters at a run followed by OFFICER HOPKINS. WIGGINS dives into the rubbish bin, escaping the OFFICER. A LADY OF THE STREET saunters on and leans against a lamp post. OFFICER HOPKINS looks about for WIGGINS and nods to the LADY who returns the nod. THE OFFICER raps once on the bin with his

stick. The LADY takes out two coins and puts them in the BLIND BEGGAR'S cup. He nods twice in thanks. A DRUNK enters and stands directly in the LADY'S path; he steps to the right and then to the left; she steadies him and touches his cheek with three quick pats before exiting. (In actuality they are passing a series of signals between them.)

The DRUNK lunges at the BLIND BEGGAR'S cup in an attempt to rob him, OFFICER HOPKINS intercedes just in time. The DRUNK staggers into the rubbish bin; WIGGINS pops up; the DRUNK pushes WIGGINS back down before careening into the side of the stage-left building. OFFICER HOPKINS exits.

As this is happening, DOYLE finishes writing. He swivels in his chair and looks into a small mirror. He expertly applies a small goatee. He stands, puts on a cloak and a broad-brimmed hat, picks up a rifle, which he hides in his cloak, and blows out the lamp. He has become COLONEL SEBASTIAN MORAN. MORAN leaves the dark area and crosses stage left.

The DRUNK crosses from the opposite side and weaves into his path. MORAN narrowly avoids a collision, and enters the building. WIGGINS pops out of the bin once again and starts towards the BLIND BEGGAR. THE DRUNK takes a menacing step towards WIGGINS who returns quickly to the bin.

Above, the casement window opens; MORAN kneels holding the rifle; he takes careful aim at the bow window. WIGGINS ducks down inside the bin for safety. The DRUNK flattens against the side of the building.

DR. WATSON enters at a run.

WATSON: For God's sake, somebody stop him!

(Above, MORAN shoots; there is a small pop from the air gun. There is the sound of glass breaking; the silhouette falls behind the bow window. There is a

scream; MRS. HUDSON opens the window and shouts to the street.)

MRS. HUDSON: Murder! Bloody Murder!

(WATSON bolts into the building and up to the second floor.)

He's dead. Shot through the head! Sherlock Holmes is dead.

WATSON: You murdering swine!

(We see WATSON through the window. MORAN whirls around and they struggle over the gun. MORAN hits WATSON with the gun butt, he staggers and falls.

MORAN goes out the window onto the ledge and slides down the drain pipe to the street below. The DRUNK springs to life and struggles with MORAN. MORAN punches the DRUNK who falls like a nine pin.

WIGGINS leaps out of the rubbish bin and butts MORAN in the stomach, momentarily knocking him into a wall. OFFICER HOPKINS enters at a run.)

OFFICER: Stop, in the name of Scotland Yard!

(MORAN lunges for the BLIND BEGGAR and grabs him from behind. He pulls out a dangerous-looking knife and holds it to his throat.)

MORAN: One step more and I cut his throat.

(The others stand at bay as the BEGGAR whimpers in terror.)

Shut up or I'll slit you a second smile.

BEGGAR: *(Straightening suddenly.)* That's not very civilized, now is it?

(In three swift moves, the BEGGAR disarms MORAN, flips him, and forces him onto his knees. In a brisk motion, the OFFICER takes charge of him as the BEGGAR removes his wig and glasses revealing that he is SHERLOCK HOLMES.)

MORAN: Sherlock Holmes!

HOLMES: Indeed! *(To the Drunk.)* That you, Lestrade?

(LESTRADE removes his disguise.)

LESTRADE: Yes, Mr. Holmes.

HOLMES: *(To MORAN.)* Ah, Colonel, 'Journey's end in lover's meeting' as the old play says.

MORAN: You fiend, you clever, clever fiend!

(WATSON enters rubbing his jaw.)

HOLMES: All right, Watson?

WATSON: Quite.

(WIGGINS runs to HOLMES.)

WIGGINS: J' you see me, guv? J' you see me plow him inna basket?

HOLMES: Well done, Wiggins! Run along now, they'll worry about you at home.

WIGGINS: Not bloody likely.

HOLMES: Wiggins!

(HOLMES gives a look; WIGGINS exits.)

HOLMES: Congratulations Lestrade, with your usual happy mixture of cunning and audacity, you have got him.

LESTRADE: Got him? Got whom?

HOLMES: This, gentlemen, is Colonel Sebastian Moran, the best heavy-game shot in the Empire. I believe I am correct, Colonel, in saying that your bag of tigers remains unrivaled!

MORAN: You may or may not have just cause for arresting me, but I shall not submit to the gibes of...this person!

HOLMES: Lestrade, what charge do you intend to prefer?

LESTRADE: Why the attempted murder of Sherlock Holmes!

HOLMES: I do not intend to press charges.

LESTRADE: You don't?

HOLMES: It won't be necessary, for there you have the man all Scotland Yard is looking for!

LESTRADE: I do?

(LESTRADE grabs MORAN'S arm.)

HOLMES: *(On one breath.)* On the thirtieth of last month, Colonel Moran shot the Honorable Robert Adair with an expanding bullet from an air gun through the open window of the second floor of No.427 Park Lane. A feat he tried to duplicate here tonight.

MORAN: You've got no proof, you Scotland Yard jack-nape!

HOLMES: Proof enough is proof indeed.

(WATSON hands HOLMES the gun.)

Well, what is this? An air gun? A unique weapon! Noiseless and of tremendous power. As for the bullet... *(He calls.)* Mrs. Hudson?

(MRS. HUDSON is seen at window.)

MRS. HUDSON: How'd I do, Mr. Holmes?

HOLMES: Admirably, Mrs. Hudson! Did you observe where the bullet went?

(She holds up a dummy with a large hole in its head.)

MRS. HUDSON: It's spoilt your beautiful bust, the bullet passed right through the head and flattened on the wall. I've picked it up from the carpet with my tweezers. What do you want me to do with it?

HOLMES: After the Inspector is through with it, you may have it as a souvenir.

MRS. HUDSON: Lovely! *(She closes the window.)*

HOLMES: Congratulations, Lestrade!

(HOPKINS frisks MORAN and a small piece of white paper falls from his pocket. WATSON picks it up.)

LESTRADE: Yes, sir! Thank you, sir. It was nothing, sir.

HOLMES: Quite.

MORAN: This is not the end, Holmes! Mark me well!

LESTRADE: Come on, you!

(LESTRADE, MORAN, and OFFICER exit. WATSON crosses to HOLMES.)

WATSON: *(Showing him the paper.)* What do you make of this, Holmes?

HOLMES: It looks like a line of little dancing men.

WATSON: It fell out of Moran's pocket. It's probably nothing.

(HOLMES examines the paper with his magnifying glass.)

HOMES: Nothing from that pocket is nothing. Colonel Sebastian Moran is the second most dangerous man in London. Come Watson, this bears a closer look.

*(HOLMES exits. Lights dim. WATSON steps into a spotlight.)***

WATSON: And so ended 'The Adventure of the Empty House.' To this day the famous air gun can be seen in the Scotland Yard Museum, and come what may, Colonel Sebastian Moran will bother us no more, thanks to the world's greatest consulting detective. No man who lives or has ever lived has brought the same passion, study, and natural talent to the detection of crime as Sherlock Holmes.

(There is the sound of a clock chiming the three-quarter hour as light comes up a bit on DOYLE back at the desk. He speaks this next line in unison with WATSON.)

DOYLE and WATSON: I am Dr. John Watson and it is my honor to be his chronicler, his Boswell, his friend.

(Lights out on Watson.)

DOYLE: *(Alone)* His friend?

Scene Two

Lights come up dimly upon the desk which has been incorporated into the study. The area is lit by a flickering lamp and the glow from a small fireplace. In the shadows are book cases, a settee, a small table, and a set of heavily curtained double doors leading to a terrace.

As the lights come up DOYLE is scribbling furiously. MARY is heard offstage, pounding on his door.

** Projection: "Holmes Pulled out his Watch." Illustration from The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter.

MARY: (Off.) Father! Father, are you alright?

DOYLE: (Without looking up.) It's open.

MARY: Father!

DOYLE: I said, it's open!

(MARY rushes into the room in a robe, carrying a lamp.)

MARY: Are you alright?

DOYLE: (Still scribbling.) Aye.

MARY: I heard you shouting something about bullets and a rare gun.

DOYLE: Air gun.

MARY: What?

DOYLE: It was an air gun. (He reads.) "A unique weapon, noiseless and of tremendous power."

MARY: Father, you promised no more...

DOYLE: (Ignoring her.) But that's not the best of it, the best of it's the bust...

MARY: We're not even home a week and here you are...

DOYLE: ..."made of wax, exact in every detail"...

MARY: Father, it is almost three o'clock in the morning.

DOYLE: Then get you to bed, child.

MARY: Not until you put down that pen and...

DOYLE: For God's sakes, Mary, I'm writing!

MARY: (Trying to cajole him.) I wish I had sixpence for every

time I've heard that! *(She imitates him.)*
"A little less noise there, Mary, I'm writing!"
"Not now, Mary, I'm writing!"
"For God's sakes, Mary I'm..."

DOYLE: *(Calling out.)* Louise!

MARY: *(Taken aback.)* Father!

DOYLE: *(Shouting.)* Mary is in my study!

MARY: She can't hear you, Father, you know that!

DOYLE: Louise! I cannot work with this child in here.

MARY: *(Upset.)* She's not here, Father. Not here to sharpen your quills, or to fill your inkwells; not here to mind the children or give you your precious quiet. She's dead, Father!

DOYLE: Dead?

MARY: *(Firmly.)* Mother died of tuberculosis.

DOYLE: But she was here!

MARY: *(As if to a child.)* She died six months ago; you know that.

DOYLE: Here in this room, tonight!

MARY: You've tried so hard to call her back...

DOYLE: *(Raving.)* I saw her! Here! Mary, I tell you she's calling to me from the other side...

MARY: Father! Stop it! *(MARY holds him.)* My God, you're burning up. *(She feels his brow.)* You're ill. Let me get you to bed. *(She tries to take the pen.)* Look at that. Your poor fingers have twisted round that quill so long that you can't even straighten them.

DOYLE: It's just a cramp.
(MARY finds a piece of paper.)

MARY: The dancing men? !!
(DOYLE turns away.)

Father, you are a known and respected writer, and yet your book on the Boar War lies unfinished and your History of Spiritualism is long overdue at the publisher, all because you are obsessed with that man!

DOYLE: All England is obsessed with that man.

MARY: He takes your mind from better things.

DOYLE: The more I write the more they cry for more!

MARY: This has gone too far.

DOYLE: I close my eyes; I see his face.

MARY: This has got to stop.

DOYLE: I hear his voice inside my head.

MARY: You must make an end of it!

DOYLE: He plagues me by day and haunts my dreamless nights.

MARY: *(Tenderly.)* In Switzerland you slept.

DOYLE: Aye.

MARY: Remember the day we went to Reichenbach, the picnic by the falls?

DOYLE: What do picnics have to do with...

MARY: You said at last you'd found a place...

DOYLE: *(Remembering.)* Aye... a terrible place... a wonderful place... a boiling pit of... Good, Mary... very good...

(DOYLE consults a small black book and is lost again in thought.)

MARY: Come to bed, Father.

DOYLE: *(Scribbling, without looking up.)* Soon, Mary... Soon.

(She picks up her lamp, starts for the door, and stops.)

MARY: If you do not find a way to end it, Father, I promise you, I will.

(MARY exits. DOYLE continues writing as the clock chimes three. A spot comes up on WATSON.)

WATSON: Sherlock Holmes was a walking lexicon of crime, from forgery to felony, from murder to mayhem, from assassination to assignation, there was not one element of the criminal mind with which he was not familiar.

Nothing could exceed his energy when the working fit was upon him. He would go for days and nights on end, without food or rest, like a man possessed.

But now and again a strange reaction would seize him and for days on end he would sit in a basket chair, hardly uttering a word or moving a muscle from morning to night.

He was plagued by a silent foe, an enemy within against whom he was powerless... boredom.

(Lights dim and in the dark we hear three shots dispatched in a regular even tempo.)