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Family Plays

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S CLASSIC THRILLER

THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

FEATURING SHERLOCK HOLMES

Mystery adapted by

TIM KELLY



THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

Dramatized by master of the horror play, Tim Kelly, from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's world-famous story, this two-act play is easy to produce and immensely entertaining for young and old.

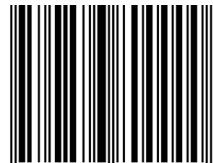
Mystery. Adapted by Tim Kelly from the story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Cast: 6m., 8w. She thought she was locked safely in her own room, but pretty Julia Stoner is murdered. Her dying scream was: "The band—the speckled band!" This intriguing puzzle is handed to Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. Visiting the ancient, decaying mansion where the tragedy occurred, Holmes warns that the elusive speckled band will soon strike again. A dangerous gypsy, an army officer, a sinister housekeeper, a humorous landlady (Mrs. Hudson), a vicious-looking seaman, and a whole gallery of intriguing characters and terrific roles add to the joy of producing and watching as this world-famous classic comes to life on your stage. Immensely entertaining for young and old. *One int. set. The play can be easily mounted, and many roles have been designed to accommodate the kind of flexible rehearsal schedule often necessary for theatres with volunteer actors. With slight variations, the Victorian period can be adjusted—even as a contemporary story. Approximate running time: 90 to 100 minutes. Code: AG2.*

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The Adventure of the
Speckled Band

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Classic Thriller

THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

Featuring Mr. Sherlock Holmes

In 2 Acts

Adapted and Dramatized

by

TIM KELLY

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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Tim Kelly

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(The Adventure of the Speckled Band)

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“Produced by special arrangement with
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THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

Cast of Characters

(8 females, 6 males)

In Order of Appearance

Julia Stoner, *a girl whose happiness is doomed by "the Speckled Band"*

Helen Stoner, *her sister, about the same age*

Dr. Grimesby Roylott, *an evil mastermind*

Mrs. Waverly, *former prison inmate, now Roylott's housekeeper*

Morgana, *a gypsy*

Kipper, *a village lad*

Honoria Westphail, *Helen's maiden aunt, a bit on the silly side*

John Watson, *a young medical practitioner*

Marie Armitage, *Captain Armitage's sister*

Mr. Milverton, *a magistrate*

Captain Louis Armitage, *Julia's fiance*

Dirty Ned*, *a seafaring man*

Sherlock Holmes, *the master sleuth*

Bessie, *parlor maid*

Mrs. Hudson, *Holmes' landlady*

and

The Intruder!

**Dirty Ned is actually Sherlock Holmes in disguise*

Synopsis

The action of the play takes place in a neglected manor house called Stoke Moran in the English countryside before the turn of the century.

ACT I

Scene 1: A stormy night

Scene 2: One week later

Scene 3: Three weeks later

ACT II

Scene 1: An afternoon, one week later

Scene 2: Evening of the same day

Scene 3: Later

★

THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND was first presented as a work-in-progress by the North Hollywood Recreation Guild Youth Program, produced by Lillian Griffith, 1981.

STORY OF THE PLAY

"IT WAS THE BAND! THE SPECKLED BAND!" Weird music, thunder, and murder at midnight! Here's a chill-a-minute stage thriller that will keep the audience in a turmoil of tense excitement and laughter, a world-famous mystery story from the pen of the greatest master of them all—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, dramatized by today's master of the horror play—Tim Kelly.

Stoke Moran, a semi-ruined mansion, is ruled over by the half-mad Grimesby Roylott, a diabolical villain who keeps a live cheetah and a chattering baboon on his lawn to frighten visitors away. He has two charming stepdaughters, Julia and Helen. One dark and stormy night Julia dies under the most bizarre and frightening circumstances. It looks as if Helen is fated to follow her sister to the grave. However, she has a friend in a young London doctor, John Watson. He has recently taken an apartment at 221B Baker Street with an astonishing young consulting detective named SHERLOCK HOLMES. It is Holmes, a master at disguise, who decides murder walks the halls of Stoke Moran—and warns that the elusive Speckled Band will soon strike again.

A dangerous gypsy, an army officer, a sinister housekeeper, a London landlady (the humorous Mrs. Hudson), a vicious-looking seaman who arrives with a large ape for sale, and a whole gallery of Sherlock Holmes characters add to this incredible and world-famous classic.

With a single setting, the play is easily produced, and many roles have been designed to accommodate a flexible rehearsal schedule. Although the play is written for the Victorian period, with slight alteration it can be played as a 1920, 1930, 1940, etc., period piece—or even as a “today” story. Whatever your choice of time, your audience will gasp with terror and laugh with glee. The play is immensely entertaining.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Properties

ACT I

Scene 1

Assorted writing material, legal document, decanter and glasses—on desk
 Book—Helen
 Battered valise or suitcase—Mrs. Waverly

Scene 2

File folder, eyeglasses—Milverton

Scene 3

Pipe (optional), eye patch—Dirty Ned
 Knotted cord—Royslott
 Flowers—Marie
 Chicken drumstick or sandwich—Dirty Ned
 Poker—at fireplace (see note under “Special Effects”)
 Rifle—Mrs. Waverly

ACT II

Scene 1

Small basket covered with napkin—Bessie
 Tea towel—Mrs. Waverly
 Briefcase, legal papers, handkerchief in sleeve—Milverton
 Architect’s drawing or blueprint—Holmes
 Small pitcher—Bessie
 Knotted cord (same as Act I, Scene 3)—Royslott

Scene 2

Pistol—Watson

Scene 3

Lamp or lighted candle—Mrs. Waverly
 Walking stick—Holmes
 Lamp or candle—Helen
 Snake—Royslott

Costumes

The costumes follow the general Victorian style—long skirts and dresses for the women, suits, vest, ties for the men, etc. Special costumes include: Gypsy outfit with speckled or polka-dotted headband for Morgana; sailor costume for Dirty Ned; nightgowns, slippers, shawls for Mrs. Waverly and Bessie in Act II, Scene 3; traditional deerstalker hat and cape for Holmes; shawl and flowered hat for Mrs. Hudson. Louis could wear a military uniform.

Special Effects

SOUND: Storm effects—thunder; sound of flute playing an exotic tune; knocking at offstage door; bird calls; pistol shot (optional); old clock striking the hour of five; door closing.

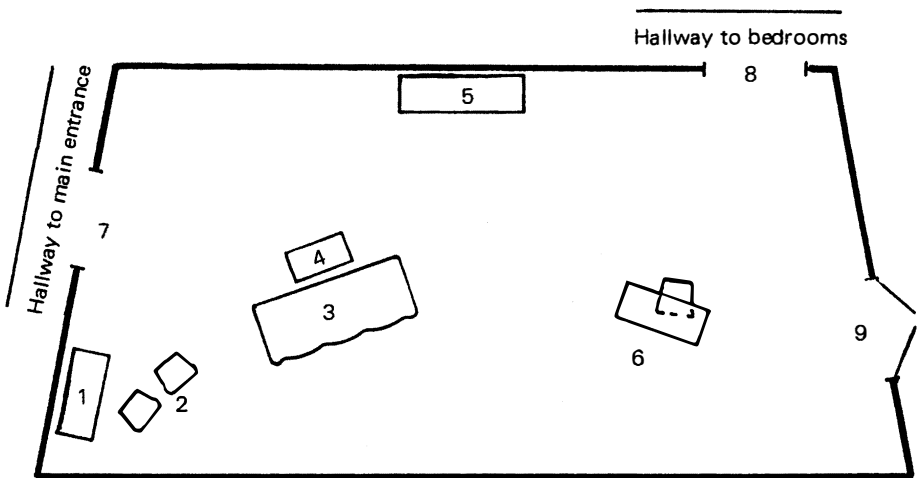
LIGHTING: Storm effects—lightning flashes at French doors. While general stage lighting will suggest the room is lit by oil lamps, it is always effective to have some onstage practical lamps that can be turned up and down by actors as director deems necessary. It makes the set more realistic and gives the room’s light a logical source.

THE BENDING OF THE POKER can be accomplished in several ways. The most common: Paint a household curtain rod black. Just be careful not to bend it too tightly (it might snap). Since the audience will assume the poker is made of

iron, bending it even a little will prove effective . . . doubly so when Holmes bends it back.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE ORANGUTAN (THE INTRUDER): This is definitely an audience highlight. No one will get a clear view of the creature due to the terrific storm and dim light. The orangutan will lope into the room in semi-darkness. Screams of others will intensify the mood. He'll scurry and lope and beat his chest, ape-like, making terrible sounds before he exits with the gunshot on his tail. Since this appearance is in almost total darkness any type of animal costume will work, from a gorilla suit to monkey mask with fuzzy costume (terry cloth, fur cloth, etc.). The posture and antics of the actor are more important than the costume. Tying gloves (shaped into a loose fist) onto the end of sticks will help give the effect of the simian's long arms. Improvisation is the key word with this costume. The scene usually "brings down the house." Milverton or a member of the stage crew can enact this role, or an additional cast member can be used (one shorter in stature than the other actors, if possible).

The Set



Scale: 1/8" = 1'

- 1—Bookcase, with books
- 2—Chairs
- 3—Sofa or chaise longue
- 4—Table, with lamp
- 5—Fireplace
- 6—Desk & chair
- 7—Opening to main entrance
- 8—Opening to hallway leading to bedrooms
- 9—French doors leading to grounds

One or two more lamps, drapes, and a bell cord are desirable. Other furniture and trim props may be added: wall hangings, pictures, bric-a-brac, rugs, hunting trophies, more chairs, etc. The set should have a gloomy, musty, run-down appearance.

Utilizing a Modern Setting

More than any other character in detective fiction, Sherlock Holmes seems comfortable in any time setting. This is largely due to the influence of the many films, radio, and TV programs that have placed him in the present day. It is always fun for an audience to see Holmes in the Victorian milieu, but with almost no changes in the script he can be placed in a contemporary period. This, naturally, does away with any costume hassle. At one point early in the proceedings have some character say: "Stoke Moran is like something out of the past. Stuck out here surrounded by nothing. No modern conveniences to speak of. Not even a telephone."

THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

By Tim Kelly

ACT I

Scene 1

[SETTING: A large reception hall in a neglected manor house called Stoke Moran, somewhere in the English countryside. It is the time of Queen Victoria's reign, at the turn of the century.]

Downstage Left are French doors that open onto the unseen grounds. Upstage Left is the entrance to a hallway. Bedrooms, also out of view, are beyond. Downstage Right is a bookcase with two chairs positioned in front. At Stage Right is the main entrance into the room. Upstage Center is a fireplace. Down Right Center is a sofa or a chaise longue; behind the sofa, a table and lamp. Down Left Center is a desk with a desk chair. On the desk another lamp; writing materials, etc. At the discretion of director and/or set decorator should be added wall hangings, pictures, more chairs, small tables, bric-a-brac, rugs, hunting trophies, servant's bell cord, etc.

However, everything about the hall is gloomy and seedy. Stoke Moran is a grim place of forbidding shadows.

A few moments prior to curtain we hear the sound of a storm – lightning and thunder, and then, a pause. For several seconds all is quiet. Until – the sound of a FLUTE. The melody is weird and chilling. The curtain slowly opens.

AT RISE: The large room is empty. The eerie music of the FLUTE continues for a few moments more, stops. The STORM effects rise again. JULIA STONER, a pretty teenage girl, enters Right. She is clearly on edge because of the weather. She moves Center]

JULIA. *[Talking to calm her nerves]* A storm's nothing to fear. I'm not going to be afraid. I won't permit it. *[Pause]* I wish I could believe that. *[THUNDER. She reacts]* Oh! *[She moves to hallway, Upstage Left]* Father? *[Louder]* Father, she's here. Mrs. Waverly. *[No answer. JULIA enters hallway. A few seconds pass and we hear her knocking on some door. FLUTE music stops]*

JULIA'S VOICE. Father?

ROYLOTT'S VOICE. In a moment, Julia.

[HELEN STONER, Julia's sister, about the same age, enters Right. She carries a book, steps to bookcase, returns the volume to its place. JULIA returns]

JULIA. Oh, it's you, Helen.

HELEN. Who would you expect it to be?

JULIA. I thought Bessie might have returned.

HELEN. Bessie will be back when she chooses. *[Indicates bookcase]*
I think I've read every old book in this house. Half of them are eaten up with damp and rot.

JULIA. *[Crossing Down Center]* Did you meet her?

HELEN. Mrs. Waverly?

JULIA. Yes.

HELEN. We exchanged a few words in the small sitting room.

JULIA. What did you think of her?

HELEN. Hard to tell. Doesn't matter, really. She won't stay. They never do. That's why we have to count our blessings for Bessie.

JULIA. I feel guilty about running off and getting married. You'll have to do my share of the work.

HELEN. *[Crosses to her, smiles]* What a foolish thing to say. It's time you were running off and getting married. Captain Armitage is a fortunate young man. You're fortunate, too. He's admirable in every way.

JULIA. I thought surely Father would object. He barely said a word.

HELEN. You know his moods.

JULIA. Only too well. *[JULIA crosses to sofa, sits, hesitates before speaking, as if she isn't sure how to say it]* Tell me, Helen, have you ever heard anyone whistle in the dead of night?

HELEN. Never. What a question. "Dead of night." That does sound sinister.

JULIA. Is it possible for a person to whistle in her sleep?

HELEN. Certainly not. At least I don't think it is. Why do you ask?

JULIA. Because during the last few nights, about three in the morning, I've heard a low clear whistle. I'm a light sleeper, as you know. The sound awakened me.

HELEN. *[Steps to French doors, peers out into the dark night]*
Probably some mischief from those gypsies he allows to camp on the property.

JULIA. *[Fearful]* I don't know why, but that sound — *[She breaks off. HELEN turns from the French doors]*

HELEN. What?

JULIA. It terrifies me, Helen. I'm frightened.

HELEN. Of a sound?

JULIA. I think I heard the sound of clanging metal, as well. I can't explain it, but I'm worried.

HELEN. [*Lightly*] You'll soon be out of this house. You'll cheer up fast enough.

JULIA. [*Forces a smile*] I know you're right.

ROYLOTT. Right about what, Julia?

[*DR. GRIMESBY ROYLOTT, last in the line of a dissolute family, is a powerful man with a fierce temper. He's opinionated, rude, and demanding. A strange man with strange habits. When he enters the room it's as if a dark presence has materialized from the ancient, decaying stones of Stoke Moran. JULIA and HELEN are both afraid of him; they react in muffled fear as his voice precedes him into the room. He enters from the Left hallway*]

JULIA. Oh . . . nothing.

ROYLOTT. Why the mystery?

HELEN. Julia's head is filled with all sorts of things these days. Sweet nothings; mostly. That happens when a girl is about to be married.

ROYLOTT. [*Moves to the desk, picks up pen*] Come here, Julia. There is a paper I wish you to sign.

JULIA. Paper?

ROYLOTT. Your future husband is an army man on half-pay. I see no reason why your money should pass into his hands. Military men have no sense of management when it comes to investments. He'll squander everything you have. I'll watch out for your interests.

JULIA. [*Stands*] I think that's something I ought to discuss with Louis.

ROYLOTT. [*Annoyed*] What, what?

JULIA. [*Timidly*] It is my money.

ROYLOTT. [*Angrily*] I am well aware of that fact. So, you choose to oppose me?

JULIA. Please don't lose your temper, Stepfather.

ROYLOTT. Stepfather? Always "stepfather" when you girls wish to reproach me!

JULIA. [*Worried*] Let's not have a scene.

ROYLOTT. Haven't I always treated you both as if you were my own flesh and blood? So, this is the thanks I get. I wish you to sign these papers for your own good. Your own protection. You know nothing of the world, Julia.

JULIA. Perhaps I will sign. It's only that I think I should discuss the matter with my husband.

ROYLOTT. [*Snarls*] He's not your husband yet.

HELEN. *[She puts a hand gently on his arm to calm Royslott down, speaks diplomatically]* My sister's much too excited to think about business matters. Wouldn't it be better to discuss legal considerations in the morning?

ROYLOTT. *[Mellows]* Hmmmm. You may be right.

JULIA. *[Anxious to escape]* I think I'll go to bed. This storm makes me so nervous. *[She starts to cross to Left hallway]*

ROYLOTT. Julia? *[She stops]* Come here. *[She casts a wary look to Helen]* Come here, I say. I won't bite you. *[JULIA moves to him]* I wish you love and happiness in your marriage to Captain Armitage. *[He kisses her dutifully on the forehead. JULIA is quite overwhelmed]*

JULIA. Why, thank you, Father.

ROYLOTT. Sleep well. Helen's right. Things will look different in the morning.

JULIA. Yes, I'm sure of it. Good night, Helen. Good night, Father. *[They nod. JULIA exits Upstage Left]*

HELEN. Shall I ask her to come in?

ROYLOTT. Who?

HELEN. Mrs. Waverly, the new applicant. Housekeeper.

ROYLOTT. Yes, yes. I'd forgotten. Show her in. *[HELEN exits Stage Right. ROYLOTT stares at the unsigned paper, grabs it from desk, looks Upstage Left]* Miserable girl. Miserable child. *[Furious, he crumples the paper, tosses it aside. He sits behind the desk like a giant tarantula, his arms spread over the top, his fingers resting on the woodwork]*

[LIGHTNING and THUNDER. ROYLOTT stares straight ahead, transfixed. MRS. WAVERLY enters Stage Right, a severe-looking female garbed in shabby black, a mean little hat perched on her head. She clutches a valise. She has a gutter instinct for survival]

MRS. WAVERLY. You Grimesby?

ROYLOTT. *[He doesn't look at her; growls]* "Doctor Royslott" to you. That or "sir." Don't forget it.

MRS. WAVERLY. Didn't mean to ruffle your feathers. *[An appeal]* I need the job.

ROYLOTT. I need a housekeeper who'll work for low wages and not ask too many questions. I have trouble keeping servants.

MRS. WAVERLY. That's what I heard in the village. They say you've got a wicked temper.

ROYLOTT. See that you don't provoke it. *[Only now does he turn toward her]* Seven years in prison. Must be hard for a female creature.

MRS. WAVERLY. I did my time, but I ain't a murderess, like they said.

ROYLOTT. Hit your last employer on the back of his head with a statuette of Napoleon. If it wasn't murder, what was it? A lapse in good manners? *[ROYLOTT laughs]*

MRS. WAVERLY. I didn't mean to hit him.

ROYLOTT. A mere technicality. Caught you making off with the silver, didn't he?

MRS. WAVERLY. *[Steps toward him, aggressive]* That's a lie!

ROYLOTT. Don't raise your voice to me, vixen. What do I care what you've been in the past? But I'll tell you this – if you give me any trouble you'll be behind bars again. You're on parole. One bad word from me and the rug's yanked from under your feet.

MRS. WAVERLY. *[Contrite]* I won't give you no trouble. *[Then:]* Sir.

ROYLOTT. That's better. I'm a man to be respected.

MRS. WAVERLY. If you say so, sir.

ROYLOTT. You'll find a room at the far end of the cellar walk. Not afraid of rats, are you?

MRS. WAVERLY. Not the kind with tails.

ROYLOTT. Most of the house is closed up. I can't afford to maintain this place properly. I'm a poor man.

MRS. WAVERLY. Aye. Times is hard.

ROYLOTT. If I catch you stealing I'll break your knuckles.

MRS. WAVERLY. I believe you would. *[He gives her a dirty look]* Sir.

HELEN. *[Returning]* How are you getting on, Mrs. Waverly?

ROYLOTT. She's got the position.

HELEN. With my sister leaving Stoke Moran I'm afraid the work would be a bit too much for me. We do have a girl from the village, but she comes and goes. I'll show you to your room.

ROYLOTT. She can find it for herself. *[To Mrs. Waverly]* Go on. Get out.

MRS. WAVERLY. It's been a pleasure meeting you – *[pause]* sir. *[She exits]*

HELEN. *[Steps behind sofa]* I think you might have spoken more gently with the woman. We do need some staff.

ROYLOTT. She'll stay. She's got no other place to go. Watch her.

HELEN. I hardly think she'd steal anything.

ROYLOTT. *[Briskly]* Good night, Helen. *[He exits Upstage Left. HELEN sees the crumpled paper on the floor, crosses, picks it up, surprised. MRS. WAVERLY returns]*

MRS. WAVERLY. Beg pardon, Doctor Roylott. *[Sees he's gone]* Oh.

HELEN. Is there something I can help you with, Mrs. Waverly?

MRS. WAVERLY. [*Steps Center*] I wanted to ask about that strange animal I saw when the cabman brought me to the door.

HELEN. Doctor Roylott should have told you about it. You mustn't leave the house at night. It wanders quite free. I never sleep without first locking my door. I don't feel safe.

MRS. WAVERLY. Yes, but what is it?

HELEN. It's a cheetah.

MRS. WAVERLY. A what?

HELEN. A cheetah. It's a member of the cat family.

MRS. WAVERLY. You mean like "kitty-kitty?"

HELEN. Only larger. *Much* larger.

MRS. WAVERLY. [*Uncomfortable*] Dangerous?

HELEN. It can be. That's why you mustn't leave the house once night has fallen. My stepfather uses it as another man would use a guard dog.

MRS. WAVERLY. [*Alarmed*] I don't like the sound of it.

HELEN. He has a fondness for exotic animals and pets. He got it when he did medical work in India.

MRS. WAVERLY. I've never worked in a place that had a jungle cat for a watch dog.

HELEN. [*Hopeful*] I'm certain you'll get on. I'll do what I can to make your stay as pleasant as possible.

MRS. WAVERLY. Whatever you say, Miss. [*Shaking her head, doubtful, she exits, mumbles*] Kitty-kitty?

HELEN. [*Stares at the paper, returns it to the desk. LIGHTNING, THUNDER. HELEN looks to French doors*] Poor Mrs. Waverly. She's bound to get lost in the cellar walk. [*She crosses to the bookcase, chooses a book, sits on the sofa to read. There is an especially brilliant flash of lightning, followed almost immediately by a violent crash of thunder. HELEN looks fearfully toward the French doors. There is a sudden howling gust of wind. The French doors fly open; she gasps, frozen for a moment in terror, then she crosses to the doors and closes them – with some effort because of the wind. She returns the book to the bookcase. Just as she does so, JULIA screams horribly from Off Left. Again. HELEN is petrified*] Julia! [*Quickly, she starts to cross to the bedroom hallway. JULIA screams again! HELEN is frozen in her steps*]

JULIA'S VOICE. [*Desperate*] Helen . . . Helen . . . [*JULIA staggers in Upstage Left. She breathes heavily, one hand clutching her throat, the other reaching for her sister. Her face is a mask of terror. From Off-stage Left comes the sound of three low WHISTLES*]

HELEN. Julia! What's wrong! [*Quickly, she crosses to assist her sister and lead her to the sofa, calls out –*] Father! Mrs. Waverly! Come quickly!

JULIA. *[Gasps]* It was the Band! The Speckled Band!

HELEN. Lean on me. *[HELEN attempts to guide her to the sofa]*

JULIA. . . . the Band . . . the Speckled Band . . . *[HELEN can't support her weight. JULIA slumps to floor]*

HELEN. Julia! *[She drops to one knee, frantic in her desire to help her sister but not knowing what to do]*

JULIA. . . . Speckled Band . . . the Speckled Band . . . *[She dies]*

HELEN. Julia! *[Pause]* Julia! *[She investigates, draws back in horror]*
Julia! **JULIA!** *[HELEN withdraws in terror, sobbing]*

[MORGANA, a gypsy woman, appears at the French doors and peers into the room. We can barely make out her features, but it's clear she's a gypsy from her vivid costume, including a red kerchief, ringed with a colorful headband. She is spotlighted in a brilliant flash of lightning. THUNDERCLAP]

VERY FAST CURTAIN

Scene 2

[AT RISE: One week later. An inquiry into the death of JULIA STONER is being conducted. KIPPER, a young delivery boy, not shy on nerve, stands Up Left, looking into the hallway and twisting his cap in hand. MRS. WAVERLY stands close to him]

MRS. WAVERLY. Can you hear anything?

KIPPER. Naw. They're in the bedroom.

MRS. WAVERLY. They've been investigating all week. You'd think they could make up their minds by now.

KIPPER. I'd have been here sooner only I was visiting my brother up north. My mind's made up. It was murder.

MRS. WAVERLY. *[She cuffs him on the back of the neck]* Mind your manners.

KIPPER. Ow! *[KIPPER moves into room, stands by desk]* He's playing quite the gent now, but I've seen Roylott when that temper of his was out of control. You know what he done the other day?

MRS. WAVERLY. No, but I've got a feeling I'm going to find out.

KIPPER. He picked up the blacksmith and threw him over the river wall and into the water. The blacksmith is going to sue.

MRS. WAVERLY. Small wonder. Doctor Roylott is a strong man.

KIPPER. The blacksmith ain't exactly a midget. Why, if it wasn't for them Stoner sisters making good his gambling debts and paying off villagers to drop assault charges, Roylott would have been carted off to Old Bailey Prison long ago. That's where he belongs. Either there, or in

a mad house, bouncing his head on rubber walls.

MRS. WAVERLY. Don't like him much, do you?

KIPPER. I've felt his boot more than once.

MRS. WAVERLY. Probably with good cause.

KIPPER. He's nasty.

MRS. WAVERLY. So's half of London.

KIPPER. He starts a quarrel with anyone who crosses his path.

MRS. WAVERLY. He's eccentric. You got to expect that with gentry. Never knew an aristocrat yet who had a whole pineapple for a head.

KIPPER. Royslott ain't got a friend in these parts, unless it's that band of wild gypsies.

MRS. WAVERLY. Why did they send for you? What can a delivery boy from the butcher shop know?

KIPPER. *[Boasts]* Kipper here knows plenty. I ain't afraid of Doctor Royslott.

HELEN'S VOICE. *[From Off Right]* I can't tell you how much I appreciate your condolences and visit, Aunt Honoria, Marie.

MARIE'S VOICE. Words are never enough.

HONORIA'S VOICE. Words are useless.

MRS. WAVERLY. Watch yourself. Miss Stoner has ladies with her.

KIPPER. I know how to behave in front of me betters.

[HELEN enters Right. With her are two women. The first is her aunt, HONORIA WESTPHAIL. The second is MARIE ARMITAGE, sister of the army captain Julia was to marry. Marie is a year or two older than Helen. Honoria is an emotional middle-aged woman, given to weeping and wailing. She has a low opinion of Royslott]

MRS. WAVERLY. Did you enjoy your walk, Miss Helen?

HELEN. A breath of air seemed to help.

HONORIA. *[Dabs at her eyes with handkerchief]* My poor, poor niece. The good die young. I, myself, expect to go to an early grave. *[To Marie]* Had she lived she would have already been married to your brother. This should be a wedding celebration, not a magistrate's inquiry.

HELEN. Sit down, aunt. I'm afraid the walk did you no good at all. *[HELEN guides her to a chair by the bookcase. HONORIA sits]*

HONORIA. It might have if I hadn't seen that beast he keeps caged.

MARIE. What on earth is that animal?

MRS. WAVERLY. *[The authority]* A cheetah, Miss Armitage. It's trained to run down game.

MARIE. Looked like a spotted tiger.

HONORIA. *[Distasteful]* Something from the jungle! I might have known.