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# GERMANY



A NEW PLAY BY MIKE DRUCE

# SHERLOCK HOLMES

*and the*

# PORTAL OF TIME



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# SHERLOCK HOLMES

*and the*

# PORTAL OF TIME

**Comedy. By Michael Druce.** *Cast: 8m., 3w., doubling and extras possible.* Only one man can change the outcome of World War II—Professor Moriarty. And only one man can stop this evil mastermind from changing the fate of the world—Sherlock Holmes. In this witty, fast-paced and wildly inventive adventure, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson must travel from London in 1921 to Berlin in 1939 to stop Moriarty from changing the outcome of history. With the help of H.G. Wells, his delightful wife, Jane, and two Albert Einsteins, Holmes and Watson pursue Moriarty through time. *Sherlock Holmes and the Portal of Time* is easy to stage with all sorts of clever possibilities. *Flexible set. Approximate running time: 70 minutes. Code: S1V.*

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# **Sherlock Holmes and the Portal of Time**

By

MICHAEL DRUCE



**Dramatic Publishing Company**

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*Sherlock Holmes and the Portal of Time* premiered as an original play at Soldotna High School, Soldotna, Alaska, in 2012.

Original Cast:

Sherlock Holmes .....	Michael Hill
Dr. Watson.....	Cole Aaronson
H.G. Wells.....	Chris Works
Jane Wells .....	Chrissy Smith
Mrs. Hudson.....	Lizzie McDermid
Albert Einstein .....	Darien Green
Elsa Einstein.....	Kyra McCabe
Inspector Lestrade.....	Alex Scarpace
Professor Moriarty .....	Chase Corona
Vera Erickson .....	Swan Brooner
Policeman & Others.....	Eli Graham
Vagabond & Others.....	Logan Parks

# **Sherlock Holmes and the Portal of Time**

## CHARACTERS

SHERLOCK HOLMES

DR. WATSON

MRS. HUDSON

JANE WELLS

HERBERT GEORGE WELLS

ALBERT EINSTEIN

VERA ERICKSON/ELSA EINSTEIN

PROFESSOR MORIARTY

CLOWN 1

CLOWN 2

CLOWN 3

## CHARACTER NOTES

The three clowns will play all of the following roles: Vagabond 1, Vagabond 2, Bobby, Inspector Lestrade, Vagabond (Act II), Soldier 1, Soldier 2, Two Spies, Two Suspicious Men, Henchman, Older Moriarty, Hostess and extras as desired.

If a larger cast is desired, the various roles of the clowns may be played by additional actors. As Vera is a master of disguise, the roles of Vera and Elsa could be played by two actors.



## PRODUCTION NOTES

**Time:** 1918, 1921 and 1939

**Place:** Various locations in England, Scotland and Germany.

*Sherlock Holmes and the Portal of Time* is a science fiction adventure that plays fast and loosely with historical fact. Readers of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle will know that the literary adventures of Sherlock Holmes took place between 1879 and 1914. This story takes place between 1918 and 1939. As to the chronology of Albert Einstein, some events have been rearranged, and he is played about 20 years younger here than he was in 1921. Einstein did visit America in 1921, lectured in England that same year and eventually emigrated to America in 1933. I am not aware that H.G. Wells ever planned a sequel to *The Time Machine*.

Notes on setting, props, costumes and sound effects can be found at the back of the book on page 67.

# Sherlock Holmes and the Portal of Time

## ACT I

### Scene 1: Holmes' Apartment

*(As the lights fade up, we find DR. WATSON seated at the table C, writing. A bottle of whiskey and a glass are on the table. WATSON looks up from his writing and speaks directly to the audience.)*

WATSON. It began with a volley of gunfire!

*(Quickly the lights blackout. WATSON exits. In the dark, we hear a short burst of gun shots.)*

### Scene 2: The Wells' Home

*(Lights up on the Wells' home. JANE WELLS has entered. HERBERT GEORGE WELLS bursts through the door R, limping.)*

JANE. Bertie, Bertie, thank goodness, I've been so worried!

WELLS *(weary)*. Hello, darling.

JANE. Where have you been?

WELLS. I told you, I had some business to take care of in Scotland.

JANE. But you're so disheveled. You look positively worn out. Are you all right?

WELLS. No, actually, I've been shot. *(Falling into a chair, he displays his calf.)*

JANE. What? (*Examining his leg.*) You're bleeding.

WELLS. Yes, I've been shot. I was nicked in the leg. It's nothing serious.

JANE. Nothing serious? You've been shot. I'm calling the police.

WELLS. No, don't call the police.

JANE. Why not?

WELLS. Just don't. Now be a good girl and do as I say. I need a drink.

JANE. Yes, of course. (*She pours a glass from the bottle on the table.*) Here you are.

*(WELLS ignores the glass and takes a drink from the bottle. Not sure what to do with the glass she has poured, JANE downs the drink herself.)*

JANE (*cont'd*). Have you done something wrong?

WELLS. It's complicated, actually.

JANE. You *have* done something wrong.

WELLS. It's nothing criminal, just complicated.

JANE. I don't understand. This is 1918. These kinds of things don't happen in civilized society. Tell me who shot you or I'll telephone Scotland Yard immediately.

WELLS. No, a thousand times no. If I tell, will you promise not to go to the police?

JANE. I promise. But you must tell me the truth.

WELLS. All right! I traveled to Berlin several years into the future, and I was accosted by a group of soldiers who called themselves Nazis. There, now you have it.

JANE (*a beat*). I'm calling the police.

WELLS. No, you said you wouldn't.

JANE. Herbert, why would you tell me such a story? I'm your wife. I don't deserve to be treated as a child.

WELLS. Yes, you're quite right. I don't know what came over me. It was a frightful experience. It's clouded my judgment. I was someplace I shouldn't have been. I ran into a gang of thugs, and I got cross ways with them.

JANE. These men, who were they?

WELLS. I can't be sure. All I know is they were a nasty bunch. They called themselves Nazis.

JANE. What is a Nazi?

WELLS. I don't know. Must be some sort of gang moniker.

JANE. You said you were in Scotland on business. What kind of business?

WELLS. Research for the novel I am writing.

JANE. The sequel you're planning for *The Time Machine*?

WELLS. Yes.

JANE. Does your research have something to do with that man who came to the house?

WELLS. There was a man? What man? Who?

JANE. I don't know who, he didn't give me his name. He came to the door two nights ago. It was dark.

*(As JANE recalls the incident, the lights suggest a memory. We see the scene play out. PROFESSOR MORIARTY enters L and knocks on an imaginary door. MORIARTY is heavily disguised and using a cane. This scene should be sinisterly overplayed for comedic effect.)*

MORIARTY. I don't mean to intrude. It's late, but I wonder if Mr. Wells is home?

JANE. Well, he—

MORIARTY. I sat in on a couple of his lectures. I wonder if I might have a word with him.

JANE. I'm sorry, he's away on a short trip. *(To WELLS.)* That was all.

*(MORIARTY remains on stage. As JANE describes him, MORIARTY should attempt to conceal his identity even further.)*

WELLS. What did he look like?

*(JANE does a quick look back to MORIARTY.)*

JANE. I don't know. It was dark. It was very hard to see. He wore his coat buttoned up to his chin, and his hat was pulled down low. He wore dark glasses.

WELLS. At night?

JANE. Yes, I thought that was odd. Reminded me of that fellow from your story *The Invisible Man*.

WELLS. Is that all?

JANE. Yes, he didn't remind me of any other characters.

WELLS. I mean was there anything else you remember about him?

JANE. He walked with a cane. He had a limp. Do you know him?

WELLS. No, not at all! Did he say why he wished to see me?

JANE. No, but he did ask—

MORIARTY. If I might be so bold, I wonder if you might tell me where your husband does his writing?

JANE *(pointing L)*. In the cottage behind the main house.

MORIARTY. Thank you, you have been most kind. I apologize for the intrusion. Good night. *(Exits L.)*

WELLS. You told him that?

JANE. Yes. He asked. It seemed an innocent question. Was that wrong?

WELLS. Oh, my goodness.

*(WELLS makes a hasty exit R. Realizing he has gone the wrong direction, JANE points L.)*

*WELLS re-enters mumbling to himself.)*

WELLS. Yes, I know. I don't know what came over me. *(He exits L.)*

*(JANE crosses R to an imaginary desk and picks up an imaginary telephone book. She turns the imaginary pages in search of a telephone number. Having found what she is looking for, she picks up an imaginary telephone and dials the operator.)*

JANE. Hello, operator? Would you please connect me with Mayfair 88993. Yes, thank you, I'll wait.

*(JANE returns the receiver to its cradle and replaces the telephone on the imaginary desk. WELLS returns.)*

WELLS. The cottage has been broken into. The place has been positively ransacked. My papers are missing.

JANE. Your novel? Your novel has been taken?

WELLS. No, my research! I am completely undone. My scientific notes are gone.

*(The telephone rings. WELLS snaps up the imaginary telephone.)*

WELLS. Hello? *(He listens for a moment.)* I thought I said no police. Jane, you promised.

JANE. You said no police. *(To the audience.)* You didn't say I couldn't call Sherlock Holmes.

*(Blackout.)*

### **Scene 3: Holmes' Apartment, Three Years Later**

*(Lights come up on SHERLOCK HOLMES' Apartment. HOLMES is seated at the table C, hidden behind a newspaper.*

*There is a knock at the door.)*

HOLMES. Come in, Mrs. Hudson.

*(MRS. HUDSON enters the door L.)*

MRS. HUDSON. I don't mean to disturb you—

HOLMES. Then don't.

MRS. HUDSON. Begging your pardon, Mr. Holmes—

HOLMES *(putting down the paper)*. If you don't mean to disturb me, then you shouldn't. Clearly, you meant to. Now that you have, please show Dr. Watson in.

MRS. HUDSON. But Mr. Holmes, I've not said anything about Dr. Watson.

HOLMES. It wasn't necessary. There was a squeak on the left hand side of the third step. Dr. Watson is the only person I know who navigates the stairs to my apartment on the left hand side.

MRS. HUDSON. Yes, but couldn't someone else use the left side of the stairs?

HOLMES. Of course, they could. But since the doorbell did not ring, that meant our guest was familiar enough with my residence to enter without formally announcing himself.

MRS. HUDSON. You are a wonder, Mr. Holmes.

HOLMES. Yes, I know.

MRS. HUDSON. Will there be any—?

HOLMES. No, thank you, Mrs. Hudson. That will be all.

*(MRS. HUDSON opens the door to DR. WATSON.)*

MRS. HUDSON. Come in, Dr. Watson.

WATSON. Mrs. Hudson, you really should do something about that—

MRS. HUDSON. Third step? Yes, I know, it squeaks. I'll have it looked into. Good day, Doctor.

WATSON. What? Oh, yes. (*Joining HOLMES at the table.*)  
Remarkable, Holmes, remarkable!

HOLMES. What's that, Watson?

WATSON. Mrs. Hudson, she has remarkable powers of deduction. She knew what I was going to say before I said it. Must come from being your housekeeper.

HOLMES. What other explanation could there be?

WATSON. Quite right. Looking over *The Times*, I see. Anything of interest?

HOLMES. As a matter fact, there is. Déjà vu, Watson. Know anything about it?

WATSON. French, isn't it?

HOLMES. Yes! Déjà vu, Watson. Know anything about it?

WATSON (*not sure if HOLMES is pulling his leg*). Er—yes—the feeling that something you're experiencing has happened before.

HOLMES. I suddenly experienced it reading through today's paper. Two stories have caught my eye. One about an extraordinary scientist from Germany. He has been lecturing at Manchester for the summer, sharing some unique and controversial theories about space, time and physics. He was scheduled to travel to America yesterday with H.G. Wells.

WATSON. Wells? (*The name registers.*) That science fiction chap who wouldn't speak with us. What was it, two years ago—

HOLMES. Three years ago.

WATSON. There you are then, that explains your déjà vu.

HOLMES. No, it's something else, something I can't put my finger on.

WATSON. So, what is our friend Wells up to these days?

HOLMES. Wells and the young scientist were scheduled to do a series of lectures on the relationship between science fiction and science fact.



WATSON. That scientist fellow should keep away from Wells. Science fiction is a lot of nonsense.

HOLMES. Watson, scientific theory and fact often begin in the realm of the fanciful.

WATSON. Invisible men, invaders from Mars and time machines, indeed.

HOLMES. Much of what was once regarded as science fiction is today reality. Case in point, Jules Verne, a man of remarkable vision and clarity.

WATSON. Holmes, surely a man of your intellectual gifts sees those stories as nothing more than the product of a restless mind.

HOLMES. I think you underestimate Mr. Wells, Watson. The scientific community looks rather favorably on his works.

WATSON. If you recall—I think it was two years ago—

HOLMES. No, Watson, it was three.

WATSON. Speaking of déjà vu.

HOLMES. Yes, that mysterious visit to the Wells' home in Sandgate.

WATSON. Some sort of wild goose chase, if memory serves.

HOLMES. Precisely my thoughts at the time, but time and perspective can change one's opinion.

WATSON. Really? After two—three years?

HOLMES. Given my current feelings, I feel it is worth recalling that meeting.

#### Scene 4: The Wells' Home

*(Change of light suggesting the past. HOLMES and WATSON cross to the Wells' home. JANE enters R.)*

JANE. Thank you for coming on such short notice, Mr. Holmes. I am Amy Wells. My friends and my husband call me Jane.

HOLMES. Allow me to introduce my colleague, Dr. Watson.

WATSON. How do you do, Mrs. Wells?

JANE. I trust you are well, Mr. Holmes. I read about your—

HOLMES. Accident.

WATSON. Accident, indeed. It was practically a battle to the death with Professor Moriarty at Reichenbach Falls. Holmes barely survived.

HOLMES. Please, Watson, we are not here to discuss me.

JANE. I am glad you have regained your health.

HOLMES. Fully recovered, thank you.

WATSON. Walked with a cane for months.

HOLMES. Now, Mrs. Wells, the fact that your husband is not by your side suggests to me that he chooses not to speak to us. This matter of great urgency is not shared by Mr. Wells, I take it.

JANE. Whether he will admit it or not, I think my husband is in grave danger.

WATSON. Great Scott! How? Why?

JANE. I am not sure, doctor. I can't piece it all together.

WATSON. Has someone threatened him?

JANE. As I told you on the telephone, he went on a short trip to Scotland. When he returned, he was scared to death. He wouldn't tell me much. What he did tell me was vague at best.

HOLMES. Could it have been related to his injury?

JANE. His injury? How do you know about that?

WATSON. Elementary, my dear Mrs. Wells. We—Holmes—noticed a pair of crutches in the entry hall.

JANE. Herbert sustained a gunshot wound to the leg. He said he ran into a gang of thugs.

WATSON. Probably nothing more than a bit of bad luck, wrong place at the wrong time.

HOLMES. What had your husband been doing during the time leading up to the incident?

JANE. Writing, lecturing. As a science fiction writer, Herbert has an extensive knowledge of science. He does all of his writing and research in the cottage behind the main house. He's very secretive about it. He claims all of his work has a scientific basis.

WATSON. Poppycock!

HOLMES (*admonishing his friend*). Watson!

WATSON (*pretending his outburst was a cough*). Sorry, bit of a cough.

HOLMES (*to JANE*). Continue, please.

JANE. As a result of his research, the university asked him to do some lectures on the theories he had been working on for his new novel.

WATSON. A new novel, you say?

JANE. Yes, it's a sequel to *The Time Machine*. He hasn't let me read the drafts yet. The rest you know from our telephone conversation.

HOLMES. Over the telephone, you gave a brief, but not especially useful, description of a stranger who came to your door. Was there anything distinctive in his voice?

JANE. Nothing.

HOLMES. Anything else you might have noticed? His posture? His walk?

JANE. He used a cane. He had a very pronounced limp.

HOLMES. Your husband knew this man?

JANE. No. He said he had no idea who he was.

WATSON. And yet he didn't want to involve the police.

JANE. That's right.

HOLMES. Then I am afraid there isn't anything we can do. If your husband refuses to involve the police, and he doesn't wish to speak with me, we have nothing to go on.

JANE. My husband is a stubborn man, Mr. Holmes.

WATSON. Foolish, I'd say.

HOLMES. Or very fearful.

JANE. There is one thing. This gang of thugs he claims that shot him. He said they called themselves Nazis. Does that name mean anything to either of you?

*(HOLMES and WATSON glance at each other. After a beat.)*

HOLMES & WATSON. No!

## SETTING

The staging of this play should be simple and inventive. It should be done with a minimum of set pieces and props. Throughout most of the play, a large window with a door on each side mounted on a rolling wagon will occupy C. The window should be covered with a light material that allows shadows to be projected onto it from behind but should not allow the audience to see through it to the backstage area.

The door L will generally represent Holmes' apartment; the door R will be the entrance to the Wells' home. In front of the window are a small table and three chairs to be shared by Holmes and the Wellses.

Farther down are three boxes. The two boxes R and the one L have multiple uses. In addition to being used for seating in the different homes, the L box will be the car Holmes and Watson travel in to visit Wells. It will also serve as part of the train, the tram and, when joined with the tall table UL, it will become a motorcycle and sidecar. The two R boxes will serve as the Wells' car and also part of the train.

Farther L is another small table and three chairs which represent the German tavern where Einstein takes his meals. UL is a tall table that will double as a hostess desk and then later as the motorcycle attached to the sidecar—the L box.

Far R is a bench, street lamp, trash barrel and the time portal. The portal is whatever you wish it to be. It can be a wall, a door or a slit in a flat that an actor can slip through. Perhaps a pair of flats can overlap in such a way as to disguise an escape. Whichever method is chosen, it ought to be a bit of stage trickery with plenty of clever lighting for effect.

Reichenbach Falls may be represented by a pair of tall step-ladders joined by another section of ladder placed horizontally between them, or perhaps a piece of pipe or some other device can be used for Holmes, Watson and Jane to hang from in the climactic scene. This is just one way to imagine this scene. Creativity and resources allow for unlimited possibilities.

Adding to the enjoyment of the production are several shadow props and a miniature cable car. The cable car miniature will be used before the climactic Reichenbach Falls scene. The shadow props are Watson's car, the Wells' car, a biplane, a motorcycle and sidecar with three people aboard, and the figure of a man hiking up a mountain. All of these are attached to sticks. No attempt should be made to hide the fact that the shadow props are on sticks.

Keep the set simple and use lots of pantomime and sound effects. Audiences love to play make-believe. The play should fairly crackle with style, pace and inventiveness. Don't skimp on imagination.

Scene transitions should always be seamless. Scenes should overlap into the next so there is no letdown or awkward pauses as lights go down and stage personnel clunk about onstage moving things and setting props. This is theatre. Audiences know things don't happen magically onstage as they do in movies. It is all right to see the actors set props or move furniture. If stage personnel are to be seen, they should always be characters. The changes should always be part of the action, not some awkward break in the flow that we pretend not to have seen. Sound effects and music are an excellent way to keep transitions flowing smoothly.

Remember, this is theatre and a comedy. The occasional breaking through the fourth wall, a wink and an aside to the audience are perfectly acceptable.

# SET DIAGRAM

Full Stage



Reichenbach Falls ladder unit

Wire for miniature cable car

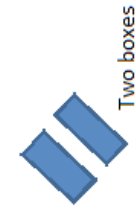
Rolling window unit with two doors



Curtain



Portal & Bench



Two boxes



Table & three chairs

Curtain



Tall Table



Table & three chairs

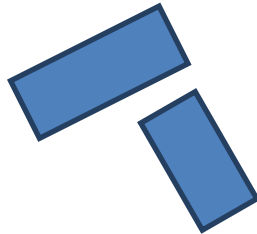


One box

## Train Setup



## Motorcycle and Sidecar Setup *(with tall table and L box)*





## PROPS

### Act I:

Manuscript and pen  
Liquor bottle and glass  
Newspaper  
Cane

Parasol  
Tea service  
Steering wheels  
Pistols

### Act II:

Pound notes  
Menus  
Pistols  
Rope and gag

German helmet  
Driving goggles  
Watch  
Manuscript and pen

## SHADOW PROPS

In the original production, the vehicles were approximately 8x12 inches. The mountain was approximately 36 inches tall. Holmes was approximately 6 inches tall. The props were made of cardboard and plywood. No attempt was made to hide the sticks on which the shadow props were mounted.



## COSTUMES

Holmes: Suit, long coat, hat.

Watson: Suit, long coat, hat.

Wells: Suit, Nazi trench coat, German helmet, riding goggles.

Lestrade: Hat, trench coat.

Moriarty: Hat, trench coat, cane, dark glasses.

Einstein: Suit, wig.

Jane: Dresses.

Elsa: Dress, gloves, hat, parasol.

Vera: Dark dresses.

Mrs. Hudson: Maid outfit.

Clowns: Bobby outfit, vagabond outfits, Nazi uniforms and hats, trench coats, bowler hats, hostess outfit.

## SOUND EFFECTS

Sound effects and music are used throughout. Low-cost and royalty-free music and sound effects are available through a variety of sites on the Internet.