

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

FRANK J. MORLOCK

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SHERLOCK HOLMES
AND THE GRAND HORIZONTALS

By

C 1982

Characters:

Sherlock Holmes, a consulting detective
Dr. Watson, his roommate and confidant
Caroline Otero, a Grand Horizontal
Liane de Pougy, also a Grand Horizontal
Le Biffon, Liane's bodyguard
The Grand Duke of Graustark
Baron Ollstreder
Mrs. Hudson

Non speaking parts:

Two bouncers
Servants

ACT I.

Scene I. Baker Street.

A beautiful day in April, time mid afternoon. Holmes is seated on the ottoman smoking his pipe, reading some papers. Watson, who is more affected by the weather than Holmes, is getting restless.

Watson:

What a glorious day, Holmes!

Holmes: (perusing his papers)

Umm!

Watson:

I don't for the life of me see how you can just sit there so indifferently when nature is blessing us with such beautiful weather. It's Spring. (Watson gets up and paces about)

Holmes:

I envy your enthusiasm, Watson.

Watson: (going to the bay window)

It's glorious, simply glorious. (looking out) I say. That's odd. Come here, Holmes.

Holmes: (rising)

What is it?

Watson:

That woman: she can't be coming here.

Holmes: (at the window)

I believe she is, Watson.

Watson:

Good Heavens, Holmes, she she looks like a French whore!

Holmes:

That is the single most observant remark I have ever heard you make, Watson. I have hopes for you yet, dear fellow.

Watson: (stiffly)

I'm glad Mrs. Hudson is not home. Whatever would she think?

Holmes:

I'm sure her views on the subject would be most interesting though frankly, Watson, I'm glad I shall not have to hear them.

Watson:

She's here, I think.

(Enter Caroline without a knock.)

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Caroline:

Allo! I am come to see M'sieur Sherlock Holme.

Caroline is gorgeous, somewhere in her twenties; her assurance is unspeakable; her charm thoroughly disconcerting; her effect on men overwhelming. She is dressed in an outrageous decollete, complete with parasol and decorated hat.

Holmes: (bowing stiffly)

I am at your service, madame.

Caroline:

You may call me Caroline. I am known as La Belle Otero but if I like you, you may call me Caroline. And (grandly) I like you. Yes, I am sure we shall be great friends.

Holmes: (with a touch of irony)

I am flattered.

Caroline:

I hope I am not disturb you, M'sieur Holme.

Holmes: (ironic and gallant)

Actually, I find your presence quite disturbing.

Caroline:

Oh, you are such a gentilhomme, Monsieur Holme. Now, me, I am flatter.

Holmes:

This is my colleague, Doctor Watson.

Watson:

Enchante. (bows and preens a little)

Caroline:

Ah, Monsieur is doctor they never tol' me, you so handsome.

Watson: (delighted)

Madame is too kind. (Watson continues to preen)

Caroline now sets herself in motion inspecting the room with the curiosity of a month old kitten. She flits about picking things up, pointing to them with her parasol, delighted as a child with a caravan of new toys.

Caroline:

Qu'est que ce que ca?

Holmes:

That is my microscope.

Caroline:

Ah, tres interessant. Eh, ici?

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Holmes: (nettled)

Are you touring London, madame or have you some business with me?

Caroline:

Oh, pardonnez moi, Monsieur Holme. I am so betise (tapping her head) I thenk everything ere is so magnifique, I almost forget why I come.

Holmes:

Why did you come?

Caroline:

To see you, of course

Holmes:

It might be helpful if you would explain.

Caroline:

Somebody killing my boyfrienz. It is not nize. You pliz stop them.

Holmes:

Some one has killed your boyfriend?

Caroline:

Not just one.

Holmes:

You have more than one?

Caroline:

Oh, I have many many. It is how to say bad for business they get die. Two already three very soon.

Holmes:

Let's start at the beginning. Tell us something about yourself. You can speak before Doctor Watson. You must not be shy

Caroline:

Shy! Never shy! I am Caroline Otero. I am Spanish by birth. Two three years ago I am come to France. I am danseuse, Monsieur. (she executes a seductive movement) The best. All Paris, all France, all the whole worl' love me dance. Nobody dance like me. (executing a bump and grind) Many many man fall in love with me. They cannot help. I fall in love with them. I cannot help. They all so nice to me. One man he's very nice. He give me flowers jewels furs big houz. His name Georges Danthes. We very happy together more than one year. Nobody ever happy like me and Georges. But one day: big fight. All finis. Finished.

Holmes:

Was there any reason for the quarrel?

Caroline:

None at all. Georges, he crazy jealous. Absolutely fou. He dare to accuse me of having other lovers.

Watson:

The cad!

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Caroline: (pouting)

Alors, it is too true. So we part. I keep everything, the houz, all my jewels. I am alone. Pouf! What to do? I meet Henri. Henri is a banker. Henri Fouche.

Holmes:

I believe he is well known even in England.

Caroline:

Henri is so kind so old so fat but never mine he never get jealous never. Oh, how I try to make that man jealous. That old man too smart to get jealous of young woman like me. Now, that man there, he know how to treat a woman.

Holmes:

To be sure. But what happened?

Caroline:

Then I meet Phillipe. Phillipe Jourdan. He rich even more than Henri. He is merely a bourgeois but he is so handsome and so generous.

Holmes:

This is very interesting Madame Otero, but who exactly got killed?

Caroline:

About two months ago, Georges get strangled wiz a woman's stocking.

Watson:

Good Heaven, how horrible.

Caroline:

Yez, I thought it amusing at first. I never thought Georges like that sort of thing, you see. Georges had a fetish about silk stockings. Always, I have to wear silk stockings when

Holmes:

I see, I see. Go on.

Watson: (excited)

You always wear (hushed) what color

Holmes:

Not now, Watson.

Caroline:

Anyway, who care? Then two weeks ago Fouche, he get strangled, too.

Watson: (hotly)

With a woman's stocking?

Caroline:

Oui! I feel sorry for poor Henri. He's so nize. But it think itz connected with his bank, not me. Except that this time there is a note which says, "He who loves Caroline dies."

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Watson:

This is nothing short of amazing.

Caroline:

Itz very sad, very sad. To love me is to die! (she says this with a certain air of satisfaction)

Watson:

Oh, don't think like that, poor girl

Caroline:

Why not? Itz true. I am the femme fatale.

Holmes:

And what has happened to Phillipe?

Caroline:

Ah, that's more sad than anything. He run away and hide.

Holmes:

Phillipe Jourdan is then still alive?

Caroline:

Yes, if they don't get him soon. He was alive before I left Paris.

Holmes:

Hmm! Is there some unrequited lover, who

Caroline:

Unrequited lover, ah, ha, ha, ha No, Monsieur Holmes. All man who have love me, they have been requited.

Holmes:

Then you have no suspicions?

Caroline:

Suspicions. Of course, I have suspicions. Mais, certainlee. I know who do it very exactly.

Holmes:

Who?

Caroline:

It is Liane de Pougy.

Watson:

A woman!

Caroline:

But certainlee. Who but a woman would do such a thing? A thing so spiteful.

Holmes:

But why?

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Caroline:

To make me so I cannot have no frienz.

Watson:

Why would a woman do that?

Caroline:

Because I have more better frienz than she have had.

Holmes:

I shall try to put this delicately. You mean from professional rivalry?

Caroline:

Mais certainlee.

Watson:

Holmes, in all my years of working with you, I never heard of such a thing.

Holmes:

Nor I, Watson, But it's not beyond the realm of possibility.

Watson:

But how could a woman, a member of the fair sex, the weaker sex, strangle a man?

Caroline:

For a woman like me, it would be very easy. I am very strong.

Holmes:

An! And is Liane de Pougy exceptionally strong?

Caroline: (scornfully)

Non, non, she eez small and petite like a starved chicken, that one. Flat too. (gesture of contempt)

Watson:

Then it seems your suspicions are groundless.

Caroline:

Oh no, she have boyfren though bodyguard, used to be a wrestler. Big like an elephant.

Holmes:

And his name?

Caroline:

Le Biffon.

Holmes:

I assume Liane de Pougy and her henchman Le Biffon are now in Paris?

Caroline:

Non, non. They follow me. They are here in London. (looking out the window) Alors, I think that is him over there leaning against the lamp post across the street.

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Holmes: (at the door with lightning speed)

Quickly Watson. Will you stay here, madame? We will return in a moment.

(Watson and Holmes exit while Caroline amuses herself by poking her parasol at various things. Soon Holmes and Watson return with Le Biffon, a gigantic but apparently simple minded man in tow.)

Holmes: (entering)

Allons, Monsieur. Watson is an excellent shot and will not hesitate to demonstrate his skill as a marksman if you resist.

Caroline:

Ah, you have captured the overgrown scoundrel. Why do you want to kill my boyfriend?

Le Biffon:

I never kill your boyfriends. I never kill anybody.

Caroline:

What you watch me for, then?

Le Biffon:

Liane told me to.

Caroline:

Idiote!

Holmes:

You are suspected of murdering two men at the request of your mistress, Liane de Pougy. Do you deny it?

Le Biffon:

Of course. Do you take me for a fool? Would I not be a fool if I did not deny it, even if I did it?

Holmes:

That is not an answer calculated to convince one of your honesty.

Le Biffon:

I don't try to convince you of anything. You asked a question, I gave an answer.

Caroline:

What a man, eh, Monsieur Holme! He looks just like a murderer, too. Brute.

Holmes:

I have more questions to put to you.

Le Biffon:

Eh, well I have no more answers.

Watson:

What shall we do, Holmes? Shall I get the Police?

Le Biffon:

Get the police. I am not wanted for any offence.

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Holmes:

I am afraid we shall have to let him go, Watson.

Caroline:

Let me try, Monsieur Holme.

Holmes:

If you like.

Caroline: (preening in front of Le Biffon who is visibly aroused)

Liane is pretty, Le Biffon, but do you not think I am pretty also?

Le Biffon:

Oui.

Caroline:

I have always liked you, Le Biffon, even if your taste in women so far has proven execrable.

Le Biffon:

Madame is so kind

Caroline:

Just because a big man likes a scrawny chicken does not mean he has nothing good in him. (she moves closer to him) I think there is good in you, Le Biffon.

Le Biffon:

Ah, madame (his eyes are bulging)

Caroline:

If you tell me everything Le Biffon, I will let you untie my boots.

Le Biffon:

Oh, madame. (breathing stentoriously)

Caroline:

And eef you tell the whole trut' an notting but the troot, you know what I am going to do for you, Le Biffon?

Le Biffon:

No, madame (he is almost in a paroxysm)

Caroline:

If you tell the whole troot, after you untie my shoe, I am going to whip you with my riding crop.

Le Biffon: (convulsively)

AAHH!

Caroline:

You are going to tell me?

Le Biffon:

I will tell, I will tell.

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Caroline:

Anyone who knows me, knows I keep my word. Speak!

Le Biffon: (unfortunately weeping)

Unfortunately, I know nothing. I could kill myself.

Caroline:

Vache! Go get away from me. I will never even let you lick my boots. (she is totally disgusted)

Holmes:

You may leave, sir.

(Le Biffon starts to exit)

Watson:

Is that wise, Holmes?

Holmes:

We can trace him and his mistress easily enough.

In the doorway Liane appears.

Liane:

That will not be necessary, Monsieur Holmes. You see, I have come myself.

Caroline:

Have you any business here, Liane? There are no stray men about, so you had best go back to walking the streets.

Liane de Pougy enters. Her style is completely in contrast to Caroline's. Liane exemplifies a classical style. If we did not know her profession we might take her for a virgin or a novice she is dressed completely in white and wears no jewelry, her hands and neck are long, delicate, and aristocratic, her manners languid, her tone ironic and intellectual. For those who like their women refined, Liane is a far better choice than Caroline.

Liane: (coughing slightly)

Your abominable climate has caused me a certain disposition Monsieur Holmes, (her English, though accented, is educated, and clearly technically better than Caroline's pidgin, though perhaps not so racy) but I shall make every satisfaction of which I am capable.

Caroline:

Merde! You never speak but the double entendre, Liane. You always trying to seducing every mans you meet.

Liane:

Hadn't YOU better go back to walking the streets, Caroline? I am told the business is brisk in London. No doubt with your appetites you would be a sensation.

Caroline:

Fou le camp! Me, a grand horizontal the greatest grand horizontal in all the world, walk the streets!

Liane:

Control your passion, Caroline. I am the greatest courtesan in Paris, in France, and therefore the world, not you. You may as well resign yourself. You do not even have the advantage of youth, much less taste or looks.

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Caroline:

Who will believe that? The woman is mad. The London fog has clouded her brain. Am I not the Suicide Lady?

Liane: (dryly)

Doubtless many men would consider suicide after fornicating with you. It surprises me that only two have so far acted on what must surely be a universal impulse.

Watson:

Ladies, ladies.

Caroline:

In two yeas as a horizontal have I not made more money than any other horizontal in history?

Liane:

Only by sleeping with more men than any respectable woman would dream of doing. Your industry, in this regard, while not to be emulated, is certainly remarkable.

Caroline: (almost ready to dance in anger)

Ohhh! Is it not because I am more beautiful? My legs are the rage of Kings.

Liane:

The Prince of Wales prefers these, Caroline. (pulling up her skirt and stretching a beautiful gartered leg forth)

Caroline:

It is well known that the Prince of Wales is nearsighted.

Watson:

Dear, dear, His Royal Highness.

Liane:

And the King of the Belgiums?

Caroline:

Another old goat. Why, with breasts like that who would want you? Look at these beauties! (she gives a little huff and pops her nipples loose from her gown) Where have you seen beauties like these Monsieur Holme in all your investigations?

Holmes: (stupefied)

Ladies, I must ask you

Liane:

On a cow! I am sure that while some men prefer overripe melons, men of discrimination like Monsieur Holmes and Doctor Watson prefer tastier fruit.

Caroline:

Only mens with no taste at all would eat off that table.

Liane: (stung)

You overgrown milk cow. If you are such a great courtesan, why do you murder your lovers like some doxie from the gutter?

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Caroline:

Me! It's you who have murdered my mens.

Liane:

Why should I do that when any man that has had you would be ready to commit suicide without much encouragement from me? Few like to contemplate death by prolonged disease.

Caroline:

You, you beetch! You, you are murdering them so that men will be afraid to love me and you can get the good looking mans and the wealthy mans from me.

Liane:

I fancy they are afraid already, Caroline, with no assistance from me. No, it is not I, Caroline, it is you.

Caroline:

Moi! A likely story.

Liane:

Yes, you! You are killing them so as to acquire the reputation of a femme fatale a reputation, which I might add, you could never achieve in any other way. Those two suicides of yours were comic.

Holmes:

Are you saying, Mlle Pougy, that Mlle Otero is murdering her lovers simply to acquire a certain reputation or notoriety?

Liane:

Oui, Monsieur Holmes. You see in France to be a harlot, no matter how competent and I am willing to concede that Caroline is competent in that regard is nothing. With us, in the great world, style is everything. I have it, Caroline, poor creature, has not. Now there are some men who like to play with fire, the Duke of Graustark, for example.

Holmes:

But why have you followed Mlle Otero to London?

Liane:

To prevent her from achieving her great end, the seduction of the Duke of Graustark who is about to become my lover. She knows he will soon be mine. Already the Prince of Wales and the King of the Belgians are my lovers. My crowning achievement will be the surrender of the Duke of Graustark. He is not a King, but he is richer than the other two combined and handsome, too. For months he has thrown himself at my feet but I have refused him.

Caroline:

Refused him! I like to meet any man she has refused. Don't believe it, she lies.

Liane:

I am not.

Holmes:

Why have you refused such an opportune connection?

Liane:

You see he is not married, and being an absolute autocrat there is nothing to prevent him marrying me which I

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expect he will do therefore, I refuse to become his mistress. Then when these murders began, the Duke, who is, one must admit, a bit perverted, began to show a little interest in Caroline. A slight interest from a romantic point of view you see, the Duke loves danger. Nothing, I am sure could interest him in Caroline, except this, the knowledge that if he becomes her lover someone will try to kill him. That excites him as she never could. Talk about underhanded tricks.

Caroline:

What a liar you are, Liane! The Duke has been courting me for months. You are trying to scare him away from me by killing my boyfriend. Well it won't work. Arrest her, Mr. Holme! Take her to the tower of London!

BLACKOUT

When the lights go up, Holmes and Watson are discussing the situation.

Watson:

What do you make of it, Holmes? I'm sure it's the strangest case you've ever been involved in.

Holmes:

It does present a few points of interest Watson from a psychological point of view.

Watson:

I simply refuse to believe that either of those those ladies had anything to do with it.

Holmes:

Your chivalry does you credit, Watson but if neither of them was actually involved we seem to be without a suspect or any usable clues.

Watson:

What a shame that two such majestic members of the fair sex should be ruined.

Holmes:

I doubt they regard themselves as ruined

Watson:

It is especially terrible that such a delicate creature as Mlle de Pougy should find herself in need of rescue

Holmes:

Why, I believe you've taken a fancy to her, old man

Watson:

Nonsense, nonsense. I was merely expressing a moral interest in her. She needs someone to protect her. I am convinced she had a good heart and could be reformed

Holmes:

I daresay that is the most utter sentimental drivel I have ever heard from you, Watson, and frankly I've heard a lot.

Watson:

Hmmph.

Holmes:

Soon you'll want to marry her just to protect her, mind you

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Watson:

Now see here, Holmes

Holmes:

I'm sure she'll bring a large dowry

Watson:

Don't be so sarcastic. My impulses are pure in this matter. I'm interested in Liane from a purely paternal point of view.

Holmes:

Well, I shall best look for someone else to share rooms I can see where this is leading.

Watson:

Hmmph. If you come to that, I think Caroline has a month's mind to you.

Holmes:

Are you mad? You know how I feel about women.

Watson:

Nonetheless, Holmes, I believe I observe these things a little better than you, for once. Caroline likes you.

Holmes:

Never!

Watson:

I'm sure she could be very persuasive.

Holmes:

I'll go to America first.

(There is a jaunty knock at the door)

Watson: (going to the door)

I wonder who that can be?

Holmes:

Well, open and we'll find out.

Watson opens the door and admits a flashily dressed young man.

Watson:

Sir?

Man: Aintchew Doctor Watson?

Watson:

I am.

Man: (pointing with his cane)

Aint he Sherlock Holmes?

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Watson:

Yes, of course.

Man: Gladto meetcha both.

Holmes:

The Duke of Graustark, I presume.

Duke:

Righto. Howdja know that?

Holmes:

I've been expecting you for some time.

Duke:

Smart, aintcha?

Holmes:

Other than the fact that you've had three drinks, spent the afternoon with a woman, and have been listening at the door for ten minutes, I know nothing about you.

Duke:

You really are a corker, just like everybody says. That's good, I like interesting people.

Holmes:

I presume you've come because you think you are in danger?

Duke:

Oh no. Danger doesn't bother me. I like it, doncha know.

Watson: (stupefied)

Like it!

Duke: (nonchalantly)

It relieves boredom. Boredom you see, is a kind of hereditary disease with the royal family of Graustark. Some royal families suffer from hemophilia or other interesting ailments, but we suffer from boredom.

Holmes:

Then it doesn't trouble you that someone may try to kill you because of your interest in Caroline Otero?

Duke:

Not at all, doncha know.

Holmes:

It has been suggested that Caroline is killing her lovers to attract you. What do you say to that?

Duke:

If Caroline is doing that just for me it's kinda cute, doncha know.

Watson: (aside to Holmes)

I think they suffer from more than boredom in Graustark and that is my professional opinion. This twit is

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feebleminded.

Holmes:

It has also been suggested that Liane de Pougy has been killing Caroline's lovers to scare you off.

Duke:

Well, that would be charming of Liane, too. All this just for me. Why, I might flatter my self in to thinking that I am rather a good catch.

Watson:

Could you seriously contemplate making a murderess your mistress?

Duke:

Well, I suppose it is a little unusual for conventional taste.

Watson: Could you contemplate introducing such a woman to your mother?

Duke:

Oh why they'd get along famously now you mention it.

Watson:

Surely, you jest.

Duke:

Fact. They could trade war stories.

Watson:

What on earth do you mean?

Holmes:

The Duke means, dear Watson, that is mother is a very famous murderess.

Watson:

Really? The Queen mother?

Duke:

Yes. Mama has a bad temper. Anytime she doesn't like somebody well that's it.

Watson:

What do you mean?

Duke:

Mama poisons them.

Watson:

Good heavens!

Duke:

Mama is a dear, really, but she's got a bad temper. She can't help it. Every member of the royal family has had a bad temper for the last four centuries.

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Watson: But, as Queen, why doesn't she just have people arrested?

Duke:

But that would be a misuse of royal power. Oh, no. I assure you, Mother has a very keen sense of propriety and justice. It would be wrong for the monarch to misuse her power by condemning her subject to death.

Holmes:

One has to agree to that.

Duke:

So how much more appropriate for mother to behave like a common subject and simply commit murder like anyone else would in the same situation.

Holmes:

Ah, the common touch.

Duke:

Exactly. That is why she has always been popular with the people. That and her sense of justice.

Holmes:

You do not seem to be troubled by the obvious danger to yourself or to Graustark.

Duke:

For myself, danger is something that relieves boredom. I have gone big game hunting in Africa. I have climbed the Himalayas. I have sailed the seven seas, as the saying is. One does what one can, but there are few lasting remedies for the disease in this humdrum century.

Holmes:

But you are a reigning autocrat. If you die, what will become of Graustark? What of the throne?

Duke:

I come from a large family, Mr. Holmes. I could easily be replaced. I have twenty–six younger brothers, several of whom, I must admit, could rule nearly as well as I do.

Watson:

Twenty–six. Your father must have been a strong man.

Duke:

Actually, I give more credit to Mama. You can understand why she has a bad temper I think. Papa wanted to have twenty–seven but Mama refused.

Watson:

What happened?

Duke:

Father became very passionate about it, and threatened to divorce Mama for a woman who better understood her duty.

Watson:

Indeed? But he did not?

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Duke:

No he died rather suddenly. He should have known better than to make Mama angry.

Holmes:

Very thoughtless of him.

Duke:

Actually, it was Mama's most popular act as Queen.

Holmes:

I must still caution you. I believe you are in grave danger if you continue to associate with either Caroline Otero or Liane de Pougy.

Duke:

I cannot take your advice, Mr. Holmes. I only find women attractive who are dangerous in some way. Lulu the Lion Tamer would only make love in a cage with her lion.

Watson:

I've heard of that woman. Didn't she kill herself?

Duke:

Yes, poor thing. She was very much in love with me, and couldn't stand it when I took up with the trapeze artiste.

Holmes:

How did she do it?

Duke:

She hung herself, poor thing.

Holmes:

Ah. Then your mother was not

Duke:

Oh, no, no. Mama totally approved of Lulu.

Holmes:

And does she approve of Liane and Caroline?

Duke:

Certainly. Mother is very broad minded. She doesn't care for respectable women. She thinks they're such bores.

Holmes:

Then you do not suspect your mother?

Duke:

Oh, no. Not her style at all. Strangling people is too crude. You see, my mother's line of the family descends from the Borgias.

Holmes:

What do you make of it, then?

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Duke:

I think we can eliminate the Horizontals as suspects. Neither Caroline, nor Liane is behind this affair.

Holmes:

I am of your opinion, but I am at a loss for once to see where this leads.

Duke:

If I had my bet, I'd say it would be Baron Ollstreder.

Holmes:

Who is Baron Ollstreder?

Duke:

He is presently a lover of Caroline's. An odious, graceless and shall I say it boring example of Prussianism. Very brave, I admit. Perhaps the greatest duellist in Europe, at swords or pistols. But as repulsive physically and morally as a toad.

Watson:

I wonder why Caroline has not mentioned this Baron.

Holmes:

Why do you suspect him?

Duke:

I rather fancy that murdering people is in his line. I have reason to believe that he is connected with German Intelligence and takes orders directly from the Kaiser.

Holmes:

What do you think he's up to? Why should he kill Caroline's lovers?

Duke: (yawning)

No idea. Germans regard themselves as pretty deep, doncha know. Actually, they don't know one word about espionage, but they must play their games. All I know is he has much more money than he could possibly realize from the miserable little farm he calls a barony in Prussia.

Holmes:

It seems to me, we must meet this Baron Ollstreder.

Duke:

I shall be happy to introduce you. We're great friends, of course.

Holmes:

When can it be arranged?

Duke:

I'm returning to France tonight. I thought it would be a lark to follow the ladies over. I knew Caroline planned to meet you, and I thought I might as well do that too. You have an interesting profession Mr. Holmes. Perhaps, I'll take it up. Perhaps, I shall be the world's first consulting Grand Duke. If I tire of being Grand Duke, doncha know. Taa, ta. I'll let myself out, gents.

(The Duke exits)

ACT I.

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Watson: (after the Duke has gone)
What a strange man.

Holmes:
We had best get ready to go to Paris by the night train, Watson.

Watson:
Why do you make of it, Holmes? A rivalry between two of the greatest wh scarlet women in the world. A Grand Duke with a mother descended from the Borgias, a German Baron who works as an agent for the Kaiser. Frankly I can make nothing of it.

Holmes:
I wonder if the Grand Duke himself might be behind this.

Watson:
But for what reason?

Holmes:
Perhaps to relive boredom.

CURTAIN

ACT II

Scene I. Caroline Otero's palatial and lavishly furnished apartment in Paris.

Her taste is expensive but gaudy. Holmes and Watson are escorted in by a servant. The servant bows and leaves.

Watson:
I say, Holmes, isn't this splendid!

Holmes:
Our client certainly has a lively sense of decoration.

Watson: (examining an erotic drawing)
Good heavens, Holmes look at this!

Holmes:
Rather well executed.

Watson:
By Heavens, Holmes, this is a picture of Caroline and the Prince of Wales.

Holmes:
Why so it is.

Watson:
This is disgraceful. Fancy, his highness posing for a picture like this.

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Holmes:

I wonder what her Majesty would say, if she saw it?

Watson:

I prefer not to think of it. I must confess I'm rather shocked. As a patriotic Briton I do not care to think of the Crown Prince sneaking off incognito to Paris to associate with loose women.

Holmes:

Your sentiment does you honor, Watson.

Watson:

My respect for the crown will never be the same.

Holmes:

I am very upset with our client for not telling us about this Baron Ollstreder.

Watson:

The very name sounds sinister. Have you been able to learn anything about him?

Holmes:

Only that he is a very pugnacious duellist and seems to have lots of money.

Watson:

I suppose you must question Caroline.

Holmes:

I mean to, I assure you.

Watson:

By Jove, as a moral man I cannot approve of her profession, but I must say, this place becomes her mightily.

Holmes: (dryly)

Your observations are improving, Watson.

Watson:

If results like these were generally known it would be rather hard to preach chastity. It might destroy the whole moral order.

Holmes:

Fortunately, Watson, the English will never believe it.

(Enter Caroline dressed as a Spanish dancer with castanets)

Caroline:

Ah, Monsieur Holme, Doctor Watson, at last you have come.

Holmes:

We are delighted to be here, but I must chide you for not telling us about Baron Ollstreder. Why did you not advise me about him?

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Caroline:

Oh, it was what you call it oversight.

Holmes:

A very significant one.

(Enter Baron Ollstreder, a short entirely bald man dressed in a tuxedo. He comes directly to Holmes and clicks his heels. He wears a monocle.)

Ollstreder: I have the honor to introduce myself, Herr Holmes, I am Baron Adolf Ollstreder.

Holmes:

Enchanted, I'm sure. I have wanted to meet you for several days.

Ollstreder: I have the honor to advise you, Herr Holmes, to stay out of this matter, and to stay away from Caroline.

Holmes:

And if I do not?

Ollstreder: Then I shall be obliged to put a little pullet right between your eyes, Mein Herr.

Watson:

My dear Baron von Ollstreder, you must not think that an English gentleman will bow to pressure from a little Prussian bully.

Ollstreder: You will be willing to explain what that means, Herr Doctor?

Watson:

Of course.

Caroline:

You will do no such thing, Adolf. Apologize to Monsieur Holme and Doctor Watson this instant or never look at me again!

Ollstreder: Ach, Lina, I am only acting for your own good.

Caroline:

This instant apologize or get out. You cannot interfere in my affairs.

Ollstreder: I have never apologized to any man in my life. I am a Prussian officer.

Caroline:

Now, Adolf!

Ollstreder: Ach, you do not understand that a Prussian officer cannot

Caroline:

Then go !!

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Ollstredreder: Only for you, Caroline. Herr Holmes, Herr Doctor Watson, I apologize, but with the understanding that I would never do such a low thing except for love of Lina, and under duress.

Holmes:

Your apology is accepted as qualified, Baron.

Watson:

For this lady's sake, I accept your apology.

Ollstredreder: Women are so unreasonable. I should much prefer to fight you, as becomes an officer and a gentleman, but ach, I have a weakness for Lina

Holmes:

I perfectly understand.

Caroline:

Adolf has a very great friendship for me, Monsieur Holme, but he is a leetle bit stupid. After all, he is a German and what can you expect.

Ollstredreder: (laughs loudly, revealing a frightful pair of duelling scars that frame his face)

If a man said that to me, I should kill him. But I am an old man with a soft heart, nicht wahr, liebchen? (he roars at this last remark, casting his head back and revealing a mouthful of gold teeth)

Watson: (aside to Holmes)

It would be impossible to imagine a fellow more crude than this.

Holmes:

I am quite of your opinion, Watson.

Ollstredreder: (putting his arm around Caroline in a crude gesture of possession, which Caroline ignores but in no way repulses)

Please understand, Herr Holmes, I am not afraid to cross swords or exchange shots with any man in Europe. I am under duress. I should be more than happy to take your measure. And I have heard you are very expert. It would be an honor I could not refuse.

Holmes:

I have no wish to prevent you from satisfying yourself, but I too am willing to bow to the wishes of this lady.

Ollstredreder: (releasing Caroline and stepping towards Holmes, as he does to Watson steps towards Caroline)

Please understand, Herr Holmes that I know of your courage and do not for one minute doubt that you or Doctor Watson would willingly fight me under other circumstances and I appreciate your delicacy in this matter. I would especially appreciate your making no mention of this affair.

Holmes:

Certainly not

Watson: (to Caroline)

Let me tell him one word.

Caroline:

What word?

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Watson: (passionately)

To keep his filthy hands off of you.

Caroline:

How nice of you, cher Doctor, but I forbid it. This is business.

Watson:

Your detachment under the circumstances is unbelievable.

Caroline:

Money is money.

Watson:

You're too good for him.

Caroline:

I've managed much worse. Besides he might kill you. (going to Ollstreder and embracing him) The one perfect grace of this otherwise unappetizing old slop pot is that he never quibbles about such a contemptible thing as money. It's his one redeeming quality. (she chucks him under the chin, Watson winces)

Holmes:

But I must ask you again, why you had not mentioned Baron Ollstreder to me, Madame?

Caroline:

But Adolf has nothing to do with this affair. It is Liane. And besides, I hadn't seen Adolf for some time. He only came round yesterday when he heard that Phillipe had been so frightened that he has retired to the country for a few weeks.

Ollstreder: (contemptuously)

Just what you would expect from a Frenchman. A Prussian officer a mere German for that matter would never dizgraze himzelf zo.

Caroline:

Adolf, do not forget I am a French citizen. I cannot allow such derogatory remarks to be made about my countrymen.

Ollstreder: You see what tyranny I live under, Herr Holmes. A man simply cannot speak his mind before this woman.

Caroline:

Someday, Adolf, you will learn manners.

Ollstreder: Ach!

Holmes: (to Caroline)

You do not think the Baron is in any danger, Mlle Otero?

Caroline:

Who would dare to try to kill Adolf? He scares everybody. Just look at the brute.

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Holmes:

And would a Prussian officer murder the lovers of his mistress so that he might have her all to himself?

Ollstredreder: (frowning at first)

Were we not under a truce, there is only one way I should answer that question however, as I must not quarrel viz you, I will say truthfully that he might if he did not prefer that his mistress have other lovers, nicht wahr, liebchen?

Watson: (aside)

Let me kill him.

Caroline:

Adolf is so perverted, Monsieur Holmes, you wouldn't believe it.

Holmes: (drily)

I think perhaps I should.

Ollstredreder: I admit, Herr Holmes, I am capable of killing any man on the field of honor but I scorn to strangle a man like a common murderer. Ach! (he makes a gesture of contempt)

Holmes:

You are not jealous of Caroline's other lovers?

Ollstredreder: Ach! For what, jealous! Let her have the best. It makes me look better.

Holmes:

So vanity is at the root of your passion.

Ollstredreder: Isn't vanity at the root of all passion, Herr Holmes?

Holmes:

Hmm!

(Enter Liane, accompanied by Le Biffon, escorted by a servant who bows and withdraws)

Caroline:

You here, Liane! What do you want?

Liane:

I have come to deliver a challenge to a duel.

Watson:

A duel!

Liane:

Yes, cher Doctor, a duel.

Holmes:

But to whom is the challenge directed?

Ollstredreder: Why it must be to me, of course.

ACT II

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Liane:

It is hardly a challenge you could answer, dear Baron.

Ollstreder: (puffing up like a cobra)

And why not?

Liane:

Because it is a battle between women. I am opening a new act at Maxim's tonight. I invite you to attend, Caroline. You shall have the best seats in the house. Come if you dare.

Caroline:

I cannot refuse. It would be dishonor.

Liane: (leaving with Le Biffon)

Now we shall see who is the greatest courtesan in France, Caroline. You will leave your pretensions at Maxim's. (Liane and Le Biffon exit)

Watson:

What do you make of it, Holmes?

Holmes:

I'm not sure, but I think we may expect significant developments tonight.

Ollstreder: We shall all go.

Caroline:

You must excuse me, Monsieur Holme. I must prepare myself for battle. (Caroline exits grandly like a Valkyrie)

Ollstreder: I will shoot anyone who does not applaud Caroline. (he clicks his heels and exits)

Watson:

Before this business is over, that conceited little Prussian will answer to me. I believe he enjoys being disgusting.

Holmes:

Quite likely. Tonight offers some points of interest, Watson.

Watson:

I still don't see any motive for this.

Holmes:

I begin to think I see a little light though it may be a false one. We shall know more tonight.

CURTAIN

Scene II. When the lights go up we are in Maxim's.

We cannot see the stage. Holmes and Watson are ushered to a luxurious table. The orchestra is playing Offenbach. (Can Can music).

Watson:

Scene II. When the lights go up we are in Maxim's.

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

This place is magnificent, Holmes.

Holmes:

It has its reputation.

(The music changes to sultry oriental music)

Watson:

I don't understand this show. "L'araignie d'Or." What's it about?

Holmes:

The Web of Gold with Liane de Pougy. We shall soon see. Her act goes on in fifteen minutes.

Watson:

I say Holmes, that woman is taking off all her clothes.

Holmes:

A very observant remark, Watson.

Watson:

This show will be shut down by the police.

Holmes:

Oh, no. The police are very liberal minded.

Watson:

Well thank God this sort of filth doesn't go on in London. Holmes will you look at that.

Holmes:

It might be better to observe the audience Watson

Watson: (stupefied)

SHE'S DOING IT WITH A SNAKE!

Holmes:

Let's hope he's had his fangs pulled.

(There is applause, catcalls, etc. Then a sudden hush.)

Watson:

Why has everyone stopped?

Holmes:

Caroline is coming.

(Caroline in all her jewels, enters in triumph like the whore of Babylon, escorted by Baron Ollstreder)

(Caroline and the Baron amidst cheers from the audience go directly to the table with Holmes and Watson)

(Holmes and Watson rise and bow, then all are seated)

Scene II. When the lights go up we are in Maxim's.

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Holmes:

A remarkable entrance.

Caroline:

Thank you Monsieur Holme.

Watson:

I think you have thrown down the gauntlet, Madame.

Baron:

Let Liane match mein Caroline, ha! Not possible.

(The sultry music starts again)

Watson:

I say, Holmes, you really must look at this.

Holmes:

Really, Watson, it's quite elementary.

Baron:

Ach, vat a nize plump little vooman.

(Caroline slaps the Baron)

Caroline:

When you are with me, stoopide, you do not look at other womans.

Baron:

But, liebchen, I only said she looked nize.

(Caroline pours a drink in his lap)

Baron:

Ach!

Caroline:

Vache!

Watson:

Holmes, is that not can it be possible?

Holmes:

Indeed it is possible. It is Mr. Rowley.

Watson:

Rowley! It is the Prince of Wales himself.

Holmes:

That is the name he uses when he makes this sort of excursion.

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Watson:

I say he's bowing to this table. Do you know him, Holmes?

Holmes:

Hardly. He's bowing to Caroline.

(Caroline acknowledges the bow indifferently)

Watson:

I say, Mlle Otero, that is no way to treat the Prince of Wales.

Caroline:

That man simply does not know how to treat a woman like me. Let him go to Liane. Old miser.

Watson:

As a patriotic Briton, let me say, madame that I am shocked the Prince, the heir to the throne should frequent a place like this. And let me say, also, that I am shocked the way the Prince is treated in a place like this.

Baron:

The Kaiser would never disgrace himself in such a way.

Watson:

Now see here, if that is meant as a reflection.

Holmes:

Not now, Watson. Look over there.

Watson:

Why, it's only an old man. What of him?

Holmes: (whispering to Watson) (aloud)

I think I begin to see the light.

Watson:

That's more than I can do. (straining to look at the stage) Good God, Holmes. Can people actually do that!

(There is a sudden hush and Liane enters. She is dressed entirely in white and sails by like a Princess. She wears but a single jewel, a large sapphire around her neck.)

Caroline:

Where is all her jewelry! Pitiful!

(Trailing behind Liane, also dressed in white is her black maid. She is bedecked with jewels, almost in imitation of Caroline. There is raucous laughter.)

(Caroline turns away in a fury, and sits with her face to the wall for a bit. Cries of Liane de Pougy, Notre Courtisane Nationale, from the audience. Liane wins over Caroline.)

Baron:

Only the French would bestow such a title on a woman. I'd like to see a German woman dare to call herself the National Courtesan. We'd throw her in jail.

Scene II. When the lights go up we are in Maxim's.

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Holmes:

Doubtless.

Watson:

Isn't that the Duke of Graustark?

Holmes:

Yes. He's here.

Caroline: (to Ollstreder)

The dirty leetle beetch.

Ollstreder: Ach, Caroline. Vat can you expect from these French?

Caroline:

I am French.

Ollstreder: Nein, nein, chatz, you are Spanish.

Caroline: (hissing)

I am French! Apologize!

Watson:

Liane is beginning her act.

(The music changes and becomes more sultry and forbidding)

Holmes:

Quite so. (he is interested in the audience, Watson is fascinated by what's going on on stage)

Watson:

If you ask me, that costume is more suited to a harem than to the stage.

Holmes:

You're becoming quite a critic, Watson.

Watson:

That fellow who's part of her act is all tangled up in her web. What do you make of it?

Holmes:

Liane is playing the role of a spider. Men fall into her web and are caught. Silly but effective.

Watson:

Ah, now I see. That fellow is doing a good imitation of Laocoon.

(There is applause, the lights go down)

Holmes: (suddenly excited)

Ah, that was interesting

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Caroline:

So you see it, too, Monsieur?

Holmes:

Pray what have you discovered?

Caroline:

She is wearing the falsies!!

(The lights go up)

Holmes:

Neither Mr. Rowley, nor the Duke of Graustark are at their tables.

Watson:

Oh, is that all?

Holmes:

I have got to get backstage. Something is going to happen tonight

Watson:

But how will you do it ?

Holmes:

Can you make a diversion, Mlle Otero?

Caroline:

Mais, certainlee.

Caroline jumps onto the table kicking over the glasses and begins a wild gypsy dance, pulling up her skirts. At first there is hesitation, then the orchestra starts to play Carmen. Two bouncers come over but the Baron jumps up instantly with his pistol out.

Baron:

The first person who dares to interfere, I vill put a leetle pullet right petween his eyes. Tanz liebchen, tanz.

(And Caroline dances for several minutes)

(Holmes returns, and Caroline stops)

Caroline:

How you like that for a diversion, Monsieur Sherlock Holme?

Holmes:

It was so diverting that I nearly failed to profit by it.

Caroline:

You find out something?

Holmes:

Only that Liane has apparently succeeded in making an assignation with both the Grand Duke and Mr. Rowley for

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

later this evening.

Caroline:

What an alley cat! Why can't she be satisfied with one at a time like me? You see what a respectable courtesan has to put up with? Absolutely shameless competition.

Baron:

Ja, Ja, Caroline Liane should not work overtime like that.

Holmes:

Please excuse us, Mlle Otero, Baron. There is nothing more to be learned here tonight.

Caroline:

I understand perfectly, Monsieur Holme. You cannot stand to watch her anymore but you are too much the gentleman to say so.

Watson:

If you don't really need me, Holmes, I

Holmes:

I absolutely do need you, old fellow

Watson: (under his breath)

Damn my luck! (aloud) Why of course

(They start to leave)

Holmes:

The game's afoot, Watson. We must be quick. The intelligence services of three countries are mixed up in this. I saw a man whose real name I do not know backstage. I do know however, that he is the head of French Intelligence. When I got backstage I managed to slip into her dressing room in time to hear her tell this fellow that she would see Mr. Rowley first, then the Grand Duke in his hotel room.

Watson:

A strong woman, that. But what has this to do with Caroline, and the murder of her lovers?

Holmes:

That I cannot tell. But as loyal Englishmen our duty is to see to the safety of the Prince.

CURTAIN

ACT III

Scene I. Liane de Pougy's apartments.

As richly furnished as Caroline's but in a modest, subdued taste. Enter Liane and Watson.

Liane:

It is very good of you to visit me Doctor Watson, but it is very late.

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Watson:

I am very sorry to disturb you, Mlle, but I am to meet Holmes here.

Liane:

You may call me, Liane, Doctor.

Watson:

Thank you. You are very kind.

Liane:

You were present at my opening tonight, were you not?

Watson:

I had the pleasure of that experience, yes.

Liane:

Caroline, I fear, was not too pleased with my success.

Watson:

Her remarks, I fear, were not entirely objective.

Liane:

Perhaps, but they could be heard for several blocks.

Watson:

Actually, I thought your performance, while unsuitable for presentation in London or in any part of Her Majesty's Domains, I am happy to say nonetheless had a certain charm.

Liane:

You are too kind, Doctor.

Watson:

Liane.

Liane:

Yes, Doctor?

Watson:

Have you ever considered

Liane:

Considered what, Doctor?

Watson:

You shall think me very silly, but you are such a wonderful woman. Have you ever considered changing your way of life?

Liane:

Oh, yes.

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Watson:

I realize I'm just a stuffy English doctor but I think that even though the French have different views about these things, that well

Liane:

You think I should reform, is that it?

Watson:

Well, yes, that is it, rather.

Liane:

You are certainly very sweet.

Watson:

You are not offended by my interfering?

Liane:

Certainly not. It means you like me.

Watson:

Well, as a matter of fact

Liane:

So, how can I be offended?

Watson:

Then you will consider

Liane:

Some of the most interesting affairs I've ever had have begun just this way

Watson:

That isn't quite what I meant

Liane:

Are you sure? I have a great experience in these things and I can tell you, that your type always starts off this way with a woman like me

Watson:

My dear Liane, you misunderstand me

Liane:

I don't think so, but of course, one must put one's ideas to the test.

Watson:

What do you mean by that?

Liane: (moving in on him)

Would you like to kiss me?

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Watson:

Now, see here!

Liane:

Or if you are so shy do you object to my kissing you?

Watson: (retreating)

I wish Holmes would come. He'd know how to handle this! (aloud) Holmes will be here directly

Liane:

Poof! Let him wait.

Watson: (retreating further)

The Lord is my Shepherd

Liane:

You English are so attractive, Doctor Watson. It's because you are so shy. You bring the devil out in a woman

Watson:

I think it's rather hot in here, don't you?

Liane:

Sometimes it gets positively torrid.

Watson: (cornered)

Does it?

Liane:

Absolutely.

(There is a loud rapping)

Watson:

It's Holmes! Thank God!

Liane:

Merde!

(Liane goes out and returns with Holmes)

Liane:

Well, Mr. Holmes, you have arrived in the nick of time as you put it.

Holmes:

Have I indeed? You look rather distraught, Watson?

Watson: (mopping his brow with his handkerchief)

Never better.

Holmes:

Tonight, after your performance you went with the Prince of Wales to a "Maison" in town for a private dinner.

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

You remained there until after the Prince left.

Liane:

I am honored that you thought it worth your while to follow me.

Holmes:

I feared there might be an attempt on His Royal Highness's life.

Liane:

Surely you were disappointed.

Holmes:

Pleasantly so. Shortly after His Majesty left, Baron Ollstreder arrived. He stayed for a few moments and then left. Watson followed the Baron.

Watson:

He went to the German Embassy and then to his own residence. Then I came here as you instructed me.

Holmes:

Shortly after the Baron left, Mlle Pougy you went to visit the Grand Duke of Graustark at his hotel.

Liane:

This is all quite true, Monsieur Holmes.

Holmes:

You remained with the Grand Duke for over an hour. Le Biffon accompanied you.

Liane:

A night in the life of a courtesan, Mr. Holmes. Surely you must have something more than curiosity to cause you to follow me about like this? I slept with two men tonight, Monsieur Holmes. I am ambitious.

Holmes:

I am curious about what passed between you and Baron Ollstreder.

Liane:

You are much more clever than I thought. Indeed, you are a great detective. But I am not at liberty to disclose what passed between the Baron and myself.

Holmes:

You visited the Grand Duke on instructions from Baron Ollstreder!

Liane:

"Visiting" royalty is my profession, Mr. Holmes. Unless you are a voyeur, I cannot see what interest this can be to you. (coolly) And I do not need instruction from Baron Ollstreder nor do I take any as to who I keep company with.

(Enter Caroline who pushes past the servant)

Caroline: (shrieking)

Murderess! Jealous bitch. Why do you kill him. Why?

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Liane:

Are you drunk, Caroline? This is a respectable house, so please moderate your voice.

Caroline:

You killed him! You killed him!

Holmes:

Mlle Otero, you had best explain.

Caroline:

Explain! I will explain. I have rendezvous with the Duke of Graustark tonight. He send for me to go to him at three o'clock. I go. What do I find? Dead Duke. And she killed him. (pointing to Liane)

Liane:

Don't be absurd!

Holmes:

Did you leave him in good health?

Liane:

Quite excellent health, Mr. Holmes. You might say he was in a state of bliss. It is my custom to leave men in such a state.

Caroline:

You murdered him because he told you I was going to become his mistress!

Liane:

That is perfect nonsense.

Caroline: (shrieking)

Nonsense! Nonsense! When I go to see him, I have key. I open door. What do I find? The Grand Duke naked on his couch tied up with this! (she pulls out a golden sash) The murder weapon.

Holmes:

May I see that! (Caroline gives it to Holmes who examines it)

Watson:

Liane could not be guilty of this.

Liane:

Thank you Doctor.

Caroline:

She murdered him. Must be her. No one else. I believe it, me.

Holmes: (to Liane)

Do you recognize this cord?

Liane:

It is from the web I use in my act, of course.

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Watson:

Think what you're saying, Liane!

Caroline:

The Grand Duke was bound with this cord.

Liane:

But of course. I tied him up with it myself.

Holmes:

But why?

Liane:

He insisted. That is what he particularly liked. First I tie him up, then I spank him with my slipper, so.

Watson:

You're putting your head in a noose.

Caroline:

Then you strangled him, eh?

Holmes:

Did you leave him alive?

Liane:

Of course. Such activity rarely kills a man, though they often say they are dying.

Caroline:

The Grand Duke was strangled with this cord. You admit you murdered him!

Liane:

Not by me. I suspect you Caroline.

Caroline:

Me!

Liane:

Of course. You couldn't stand the thought that the Grand Duke was already mine.

Caroline:

Liar!

Holmes:

Did you find anything else of significance at the scene?

Caroline:

Only this old circus ticket.

Holmes:

May I?

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Caroline: (giving him the ticket)
Of course.

Holmes:
This ticket is five years old.

Caroline:
I found it next to the Duke's body. Ah, poor man, he loved me so much.

Liane:
Merde!

Holmes:
Do you recognize this ticket?

Liane:
It is the Cirque de Graustark. Le Biffon!

(Le Biffon enters. He had been hiding behind some drapes.)

Le Biffon:
Yes, Liane.

Liane:
You used to be in the Cirque de Graustark.

Le Biffon:
Many years ago.

Liane:
You see this ticket?

Le Biffon:
Oui.

Liane:
What do you know about it?

Le Biffon:
Me?

Liane:
You.

Le Biffon:
Nothing.

Liane:
Do not lie!

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Le Biffon:

I know nothing.

Liane:

You killed the Grand Duke.

Le Biffon:

Why should I do that?

Liane:

That is what I want to know.

Le Biffon:

Not me.

Liane:

You always follow me discreetly to my assignments, as is proper. You saw me leave, escorted me here, then went back and killed him. You left this ticket as some kind of calling card.

Le Biffon:

I see no reason why I should do that.

Liane:

I am asking you.

Le Biffon:

You better ask someone who knows.

Liane:

Le Biffon.

Le Biffon:

Madame?

Liane:

Untie my shoe.

Le Biffon:

Oui, Madame. (he kneels, and trembling begins to untie her shoe, he is panting, his eyes bulge, his face is the color of eggplant)

Liane: (pulling up her skirt a little)

Why did you do it?

Le Biffon (gasping)

I didn't do it.

Liane:

Le Biffon?

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Le Biffon:

Madame?

Liane:

Who am I?

Le Biffon:

Maitresse.

Liane:

Who are you?

Le Biffon:

Esclave. Your slave.

Liane:

Answer!

Le Biffon:

Because of Lulu the Lion Tamer.

Liane:

Explain!

Le Biffon:

She was my sister. Five years ago the Grand Duke seduced her.

Liane:

That's no reason to kill a man.

Caroline:

Heavens no!

Le Biffon:

She loved him. When he went off with the trapeze artist, she killed herself.

Caroline:

Romantic little fool. Kill oneself over a man. No, no. It is the mens who muzt kill themselves over woman.

Le Biffon:

I love my sister very much. I want to kill this Grand Duke. But, I cannot get near him in Graustark. His protection was too good. So I left Graustark, and worked for you. I try to forget, but still, in my heart, I love my sister. Then tonight, I follow you as is my duty. I take you home then I go back. Easy to get in, his body guard was asleep. I find him all trussed up like a turkey in that gold cord. All I had to do was to tighten it up. I explained to him the wrong he had done my sister. He said he was very sorry but then of course, I killed him.

Liane:

But you never think of me. Didn't you realize I would be suspected?

Le Biffon:

I am sorry. I am so stupid. It was my big chance. I intend to take the cord, but I hear Caroline at the door, and I

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run away.

Liane:

Stupid! You should have killed her and made it look like a double suicide.

Le Biffon:

Next time Liane.

Caroline:

But why did he kill Fouche and Villefranche? What's Lulu got to do with them?

Watson:

That's a good point.

Le Biffon:

I did not kill those men.

Watson:

Then who did?

Holmes:

Why, Baron Ollstreder, of course. Please come join us, it must be dark behind those curtains.

Baron: (emerging, pistol in hand from behind the curtains)

You are quite right, Herr Holmes.

Holmes:

You see, Watson, the Baron was trying to prevent Caroline from interfering with Liane.

Caroline:

You Adolf! You love me so much you haf to kill everybody else?

Baron:

Caroline, if you had not been such an idiot, none of this would be necessary. You see, Herr Doktor, we had to restrict Caroline's activities a little. Caroline could not be recruited to our service. You can get gossip out of her easily enough, but she will never agree to work for anybody. A shame, too, because she has lots of opportunities. Several of my agents approached her but they were rejected with indignation.

Caroline:

I should think so! Me, a Grand Horizontal stoop to spying. Never, me!

Baron:

What to do? The Grand Horizontals are sleeping with all the Kings, Ministers, Grand Dukes, and financiers in Europe. They get all kinds of information. Liane was smart. She agreed to work for us, but Caroline is always trying to snare the same Kings, Ministers, Grand Dukes, financiers, etc. What to do? Leave it to German ingenuity. We cannot harm a woman. So we kill off Caroline's lovers and frighten everybody else to Liane. Clever, nicht wahr?

Holmes:

And you get to keep Caroline to yourself, in the bargain.

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Caroline:

I am sure this was Liane's idea.

Holmes:

Diabolical! Almost worthy of Moriarity.

Baron:

Who is this Moriarity?

Holmes:

The Napoleon of crime.

Baron:

Ach, we defeated him at Waterloo. Anyway, I haff to kill you and Herr Doktor now. Then I kill Le Biffon with your gun. Everybody thinks you killed each other and Le Biffon was responsible for murdering everybody.

Le Biffon:

You gong to kill me. I don't like that.

Baron:

Yes, and Caroline, too, unfortunately.

Liane:

That's a better idea. Start with her.

Caroline:

Adolf, you cannot!

Baron:

I can. But I will leave you till last. First I must kill Mr. Holmes.

(Watson tenses and is about to rush the Baron)

Liane:

Quel dommage!

Baron:

Please step aside, Liane and plug your ears.

(The Baron points his pistol towards Holmes, Watson starts to rush him, Caroline shrieks, and a shot rings out. The Baron collapses at Watson's feet. Liane blows the smoke away from her derringer and returns it to her gown. Holmes has not moved an inch.)

Watson: (examining the Baron)

You have put a bullet right between his eyes.

Liane:

The only thing I regret about killing that wretch is that he left everything in his will to Caroline.

Caroline:

How much do I get?

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Watson:

Then you are not working for the Germans?

Liane:

Me! The National Courtesan of France work for the Boche! I'll have you know my father was a French Officer. Do you think that because I am a courtesan, I am not a patriot? (placing her hand majestically over her heart) When the Tricolor passes does not my heart beat faster like any French woman?

Holmes:

Allow me to introduce you to the best agent in the employ of the Deuxieme Bureau, Watson.

Watson:

You knew all along, Holmes?

Holmes:

I had a brief discussion with the gentleman I told you I recognized.

Liane:

You were very brave, Doctor Watson.

Watson: (bowing)

Thank you, Liane.

Liane:

It was time to write finis to the Baron's activities. We have been feeding him false information for several years. Indeed, German Intelligence knows just about what we want them to know which is not much and most of it misleading. But we owe them for killing two of our agents in Berlin recently. This will be but a small installment on that debt. The good Baron will have to take the responsibility for murdering the Duke of Graustark, too. That will certainly cause our German friends a good deal of embarrassment.

Holmes:

And who will be responsible for the Baron's death?

Liane:

Why, you and Doctor Watson, Monsieur Holmes. I am sorry, but that is the price you must pay for my saving your life.

(Holmes bows)

Liane:

After all, it is the least you can do. I had to break my cover. Surely, you will not object to saving a lady from minor embarrassment?

Holmes:

I should be delighted.

Liane:

As for Le Biffon, we shall forget about Lulu. He really is quite helpful and we must overlook this little indiscretion. After all it's not likely to be repeated.

Sherlock Holmes and the Grand Horizontals.

Caroline:

And what about me! You think I am going to let you get away with this, Liane? Now, I don't got nobody.

Liane:

My dear Caroline, you will certainly find someone easily enough. And the Baron left you nearly half a million pounds in his will. He was fond of you, the disgusting old goat. That should be enough to silence you. If not, we shall have to accuse you of spying for the English and the Russians.

Caroline:

Me! Never. I never spy for nobody. Never!

Liane:

It really doesn't matter if the accusation is true or not. If we have to, we'll prove it even if we have to forge the evidence.

Caroline:

Lies! This is blackmail.

Liane:

Exactly. So do keep quiet about all this. And from now on, Caroline, you will also have to work for us. Is that clear?

Caroline:

Very well. But I call on Mr. Holme to witness that I am under duress.

Liane:

If you like. Now that this is all settled (pushing the baron with a little slipped foot) I think the exertion has been too much for me. I think I have palpitations. Do something, Doctor. (she falls into the arms of the astonished Watson)

Holmes:

Well, don't just stand there. Watson, attend to your patient. Le Biffon and I will attend to the Baron.

(Watson leads Liane off)

Le Biffon: (picking up the Baron)

I shall put him in the cellar till morning. I don't need any help. (exit Le Biffon)

Caroline:

Humph! This is a fine how do you do! Now I must work for Liane. We have both had Kings, Dukes, and Millionaires for lovers. Poets, playwrights, sportsmen have fallen at our feet. In everything I have been her equal, but that is not enough. (pausing she looks directly at Holmes) But I shall be the only Grand Horizontal to have slept with the World's greatest Consulting Detective.

(Holmes wraps his cape about him and flees without a word)

Caroline:

Do not go, Cheri. I will prove to you who is the greatest courtesan in all the world. (she exits running after him)

BLACKOUT

EPILOGUE

We are back at 221 Baker Street.

Watson:

I never expected you to quit the field of honor so precipitously.

Holmes:

There is a time for everything, Watson. That was definitely not the time for heroism. I regard that as the single most close call I have ever had, not excluding that little incident with Dr. Moriarity at the Reichenback Falls.

(Enter Mrs. Hudson)

(Mrs. Hudson is a dumpy little woman dressed all in black)

Mrs. Hudson:

Mr. Holmes, so you have returned at last.

Holmes:

Ah, my dear Mrs. Hudson.

Mrs. Hudson:

Don't you my dear Mrs. Hudson me.

Holmes:

But Mrs. Hudson

Mrs. Hudson:

I fear Mr. Holmes, I shall have to give you notice.

Holmes:

But, I have paid my rent

Mrs. Hudson:

You have had a woman up here in my absence. I never thought a gentleman like you would be capable of such a thing especially when my back was turned.

Holmes:

My dear Mrs. Hudson, I assure you

Mrs. Hudson:

Now don't you be trying to fool me, sir. It was a French whore. I am something of a detective myself in these matters. No, sir, it will not do. The only business she was here for was monkey business. Not in my house.

(Watson and Holmes try to protest as the

CURTAIN FALLS)