

THE REAL SHERLOCK HOLMES

Dramatized from an original story By Frank J. Morlock

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Etext by Dagny

CHARACTERS

Dr. Watson
Irene Adler Norton
Sherlock Holmes
Professor James Moriarity
Mycroft Holmes

The scene is Baker Street. Everything is packed to leave. Chairs are covered with sheets. Only a few things of Holmes' remain. The Persian slipper where Holmes kept his tobacco and his pipe are on a table. Watson is pacing up and down meditatively.

Watson

Enough of this sentimentality, it's time to go. There's no point in my staying here anymore. The associations are too painful. (picking up the pipe and slipper) Holmes is dead and no amount of grieving will bring him back to life. Memories! To think I used to be annoyed that he kept his tobacco in a slipper. What I would give to see him alive and well again! (replacing the slipper) Well, well. (a knock at the door. Watson goes to open it) That must be Mrs. Hudson or the cabbie. (opening the door) IRENE ADLER!

Irene (regally dressed woman of great beauty)

Dr. Watson! I didn't expect to see you here.

Watson

Well, this is a pleasant surprise.

Irene

You look as though you are leaving.

Watson

I'm taking new lodgings. But what are you doing in London? I thought you had gone to Paris?

Irene

I'm returning to the stage. I'm singing Marguerite in Faust.

Watson

Indeed. I should be glad to hear you sing. I have often regretted that I never had the pleasure.

Irene

Thank you so much, Dr. Watson. You were always very gallant.

Watson

Not at all! I meant it sincerely.

Irene

It's your sincerity that makes you so gallant, you see.

Watson

Have you been well, I trust, these last few years?

Irene (uneasily)

Oh, very well. I don't allow things to get me down. (pointedly) And, where is your companion, Mr. Holmes?

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Watson

Ah, you must not have known. The best of men is dead—one year ago this month.

Irene (surprised)

Indeed, I didn't know. I hadn't heard from—of him in some time.

Watson

It is a loss which not only I, but the whole world must suffer.

Irene (passionately)

Permit me to say: the world can manage very well without Mr. Sherlock Holmes!

Watson

I beg you to change your tone immediately.

Irene

Your devotion is quite touching.

Watson (angrily)

Never mind my devotion.

Irene

I am sorry to offend you, Dr. Watson, but despite his intellect which I admit was peerless, he was a scoundrel!

Watson

Really, Frau Adler, I cannot allow such a reflection on his memory even from a lady for whom I entertain the highest regard. And, may I add a lady that Sherlock Holmes honored above all others.

Irene

Dr. Watson, your feelings do you great honor. But, unfortunately, I am certain of what I say.

Watson

But, surely, Frau Adler, you can bear Holmes no grudge for trying to recover that photograph of you and a certain royal personage—in order to prevent what must be admitted was a form of blackmail—even though your motive in threatening to expose His Majesty was jealousy, not venality. You can hardly complain of the ruse he employed. Besides, you yourself, actually bested him. And finally, it was of your own free will that you destroyed the photograph when you married Alfred Norton!

Irene

Oh, on that score, I bear him no ill will. It was fair play. It was for the other things he did to me.

Watson (cheerfully)

Well, then, you see there is no basis for rancor—

Irene

The rancor is for the years he blackmailed me after that—

Watson (astounded)

Blackmailed you! What are you talking about?

Irene

Something you evidently know nothing about. If you did, you wouldn't bandy words with me!

Watson

I'm completely at sea.

Irene

It's hardly surprising. If I were Sherlock Holmes, I shouldn't tell an honorable man about it, either. Not if I hoped to retain his respect.

Watson

I am certain there is some mistake which can easily be put right. I beg you to tell me the story.

Irene

You will recall, Dr. Watson, that I willingly gave up the photograph and all hopes of revenge when I chose to marry Alfred Norton. It was the least I could do for a man who married me with full knowledge of all my prior indiscretions and who never once mentioned them to me. I hardly expected Sherlock Holmes to pursue me across the Continent and destroy my marriage. Yes, I fled him. But it was no use.

Watson

What you are saying is incredible.

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Irene

Sherlock Holmes persecuted me for three years.

Watson

I don't believe it.

Irene

I will prove it. As you know, Dr. Watson, your friend had the reputation of being indifferent to women.

Watson

You were the only woman he ever found attractive.

Irene

Who would suspect him of being a lecher?

Watson

Frau Adler, this is too much! This is indecent!

Irene

He ruined my marriage, Dr. Watson. When I left London, I was supremely confident that I would live happily with my husband. My husband was not wealthy but he had an income of some sort. I had turned my back on my past. And my past, as you know, had included many men, even a prince or two.

Watson

I read the file.

Irene

I was in love with my husband. He was a wonderful man, never jealous and perfectly indifferent to the prejudices of this age about proper behaviour for a woman. In short, he was irresistible. He was proud of me. I think nothing could have destroyed my marriage, except the malevolence of Sherlock Holmes.

Watson

Holmes was never malevolent.

Irene

You will judge for yourself. I was living a retired life in Paris with my husband, when I received a communication from Sherlock Holmes that he must see me on urgent business. I was a little surprised, but I had such a good opinion of him that I agreed at once to meet him.

Watson

There, you admit—

Irene

Hear me out! I walked blindly into the trap that he had set for me. When we met, there was an unpleasant glint in his eyes. He asked me if I remembered Admiral Kovalevsky.

Watson

I recall Holmes was interested in Kovalevsky. He was murdered in Berlin and Holmes thought Moriarity had something to do with it. But, you knew Kovalevsky?

Irene

Yes. I had been his companion for several months about five years previously.

Watson

Undoubtedly Holmes sought your assistance in solving the murder.

Irene

I thought that, too. I told him I didn't see how I could help him, as I hadn't been in touch with the Admiral in many years.

Watson

I see.

Irene

It was then he said that the Admiral's death was of no concern to me. However, the Admiral had died possessed of some photographs of me, which had come into your friend's possession.

Watson

I am surprised that Holmes didn't simply destroy them.

Irene

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Your naivete is amazing, Dr. Watson. The Admiral had got me drunk on Vodka, and well, the photographs he took were not merely compromising, they were obscene. I speak as a woman who is not shy in such matters.

Watson

Good heavens!

Irene

I didn't know the photographs existed until afterwards. The Admiral refused to part with them when he separated from me. He wanted them for his personal collection. He promised never to show them to anyone.

Watson

Did he?

Irene

Men like to boast, but I believe he never did. He never sought to blackmail me. In his funny Russian way, the Admiral was the soul of honor.

Watson

But, why would Holmes—?

Irene

I was stupid enough to think he wanted to return them to me.

Watson

And—

Irene

He demanded—

Watson

Money? I'll never believe it.

Irene

Not money. Absolute obedience. I said "no." He then passed me one of the photographs. I turned scarlet. I never had blushed before in my life. No, not even when the Duchess of Amalfi discovered me in bed with her husband.

Watson

Finish your story.

Irene

I asked what I must do. He told me that I would receive instructions.

Watson

I know my protests make no impression, Frau Adler, but this is inconceivable.

Irene

No less to you than it was to me. But I had to obey. I couldn't let my husband ever see such photographs.

Watson (cautiously)

What demands did he make?

Irene

At first, simple ones. Hardly necessary to employ threats. Meet him at this or that cafe wearing a corsage or bracelet. Mere obedience training. Then, suddenly he ordered me to meet him at Lake Como. It was dreadful. I had no plausible excuse for going to Italy, and I abhorred lying to my husband. I told him to trust me. I kept the appointment.

Watson

And what did you do there?

Irene

At first, nothing. I was furious. Then I was ordered to meet a Russian woman and accept a packet from her. I did as instructed. A week later, the packet was picked up by an English lady. I returned to Paris and patched things up as well as I could with my husband.

Watson

This is all very bizarre.

Irene

Nothing happened for several months. Then Holmes appeared again and this time I had to go to Venice. Immediately! I begged. I stormed. I offered to become his mistress. Holmes was implacable! I went. I had no

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conception of what horrors awaited me in Venice. I expected another routine courier operation.

Watson

And?

Irene

More was expected of me. When I heard his vile arrangements, I nearly fainted.

Watson

What did he want of you?

Irene

His Majesty, the King of Bohemia (you know his real title) was on a state visit. I was instructed to resume my liaison with him.

Watson

Surely, you refused?

Irene

Outright! I pointed out that His Majesty and I had parted on very unfriendly terms and that we were both married. Holmes asked me how long my current marriage would last if my husband received those photographs. I still refused. Better exposure than this.

Watson

Good for you! I am sure you would refuse such a demand.

Irene

But, my marriage was doomed anyway, as your friend quickly pointed out to me.

Watson

Why?

Irene

Because as soon as my husband learned that the King of Bohemia was in Venice he would never believe that I went there for any purpose but to renew the liaison. I laughed at Holmes then. I told him he had at least set me free.

Watson

That was certainly the right thing to do.

Irene

But, it was not to be. Holmes pointed out that I had been engaged in espionage under his direction for the last six months. He told me I could expect to spend the next ten years of my life in prison—if the courts were merciful.

Watson

This is dastardly! Dastardly!

Irene

The next day, by a cleverly arranged accident, I met His Majesty. To my surprise, he was delighted to see me.

Watson

That hardly surprises me at all.

Irene

Now that he was legally married, he cared nothing for the Princess' jealousy. He practically jumped for joy when he met me. He thought because he harboured no resentment towards me that I felt none towards him. What fools we are! Not only did I resent the way he had treated me in the past, I blamed him for the destruction of my marriage. Oh, how I hated him.

Watson (musing)

That must have fallen in perfectly with Holmes' plans—

Irene

I didn't care. His Majesty is very weak, you know. Easily managed. My instructions were to reduce him to complete submission. Never have orders been more willingly obeyed. It was so easy.

Watson

This is horrible.

Irene

My prolonged absence made it impossible to keep the affair from my husband. He learned of it and committed

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suicide by throwing himself in the Seine. Do you see why I hate Sherlock Holmes?

Watson

Is it possible that I never really knew the man? That he deceived me completely?

Irene

He was a German or Austrian agent, Dr. Watson. He had to be.

Watson

Will you let me try to prove it is not so? I have my records packed up here. If I can prove that Holmes was in London or that he wasn't where you believe him to have been?

Irene

I am willing to listen. But, don't you see? The man led a double life. We'll never know who he really was.

Watson

But, why did you come here?

Irene

I came here to kill him.

Watson

What!

Irene

When I learned of my husband's death, I had a breakdown. I only recently recovered. I decided to revenge myself.

Watson

You had a breakdown?

Irene

Yes. I was beyond his power. I started crying. I cried all day for two years. His Majesty left me in a sanitarium. I must say, he was kind to me. He paid all my bills quite regularly. I didn't know that Holmes was dead, you see, or I wouldn't have come. Even in death, he has cheated me. (giving her hand to Dr. Watson) I'm going. It's just as well, I suppose. Come see me sing. They say I've gained a lot as a singer recently. Before I never could sing tragedy. (she goes out)

Watson (sitting down, bowing his head)

It can't be. It can't be.

Cabbie (knocking and entering)

Ar' you the bloke what ordered a cab?

Watson

What? Yes. How did you get in?

Cabbie Door's wide open, mate. Say, are you all right? Look like you had some kind of tragedy?

Watson

No, no. I'll be myself presently. Just wait a bit.

(Watson sits down.)

Holmes

Watson, my dear fellow, what's wrong?

Watson (staring at the Cabbie)

Holmes, is it you?

Holmes

None other. See. (throwing off his disguise) I am flesh and blood.

Watson

But, how? By what miracle did you survive that fall into the Reichenbach?

Holmes

No miracle. I couldn't have survived it, if I had fallen. I say, it was thoughtful of you to keep my pipe and slipper. (goes to pipe and fills it) Do you know the hardest thing about a disguise is the inability to do simple things like enjoy a pipe.

Watson

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Holmes, in God's name, where have you been for the last year?

Holmes

All in good time, my dear fellow. Obviously, I didn't fall.

Watson

But, all the evidence!

Holmes

It was a put up job, Watson. I walked away as I had come.

Watson

And Moriarity?

Holmes

We left together.

Watson

What!

Holmes

The deception I practised on you was the most difficult thing I've ever had to do in my life. But it was necessary the world think me dead. Especially you, dear Watson.

Watson

I don't understand at all. How as Moriarity involved in this?

Holmes

We planned it together. A trifle melodramatic, but Moriarity's brain works that way, and he convinced me that nothing better would serve our turn.

Watson

"Our turn," Holmes? But, Moriarity was the Arch Enemy. What is going on? Explain yourself immediately.

Holmes

It was necessary so that we, Moriarity and I, could undertake a secret mission for Her Majesty. I have just completed it.

Watson

But, what had Moriarity to do with such a mission? Why was he meant to appear dead?

Holmes

Moriarity needed his freedom, too. He could no longer continue his work in London. He was needed elsewhere.

Watson

Holmes, I understand none of this. Are you suggesting Moriarity was also engaged in special service?

Holmes

An explanation is in order.

Watson

And long overdue.

Holmes

Certain things I can tell you, but others I cannot reveal. Even to you, my dear friend. It began with the death of Admiral Kovalevsky in Berlin.

Watson

Kovalevsky!

Holmes

You recall I suspected Moriarity of being responsible for that murder?

Watson

Yes, yes, I recall.

Holmes

I was perfectly correct, of course. I had absolute proof and I confronted Moriarity.

Watson

Then, for God's sake man, why didn't you bring him to justice?

Holmes

Because he had committed no crime.

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Watson

Stop talking in riddles, Holmes. Is murder no crime?

Holmes

Picture me confronting Professor Moriarity at gun point—preparing to bring him to the gallows or kill him if he resisted arrest.

(The stage darkens. Holmes and Moriarity are spotlighted.)

Holmes

Your criminal career is over, Professor. A great career, I would be the first to admit. But finished.

Moriarity

What makes you think I am a criminal, Mr. Sherlock Holmes?

Holmes

What else can one think of a man who had been behind every major criminal act in this and several other European capitals?

Moriarity

But, is that not in itself suggestive?

Holmes

Yes. Of megalomania. I've said many times you are the Napoleon of crime.

Moriarity

I prefer to think of myself as Caesar. But to what end? Criminals are no doubt very selfish individuals—but the megalomaniacs join the army, the civil service, or better yet become politicians. They aspire to rule the world, not the underworld.

Holmes

As a general observation, undoubtedly true. Still, we have your example.

Moriarity

Please observe that I do not deny that I am a megalomaniac.

Holmes

Yes, you merely pointed out that a megalomaniac seeks wider scope for his activities.

Moriarity

I reiterate my point. Do you take it?

Holmes

If you are a megalomaniac, you are not a criminal. You are a megalomaniac, therefore you—

Moriarity

Q.E.D. I am not a criminal.

Holmes

Then, how do you explain your ever present hand in all these criminal operations, not to mention this little murder of Admiral Kovalevsky?

Moriarity

There is, it seems to me, a fairly obvious explanation.

Holmes

I should be delighted to hear it.

Moriarity

I rather thought you could solve the puzzle without my assistance. You disappoint me, Mr. Holmes. Obviously I am into criminal activity for legitimate purposes.

Holmes

You mean that—

Moriarity

The truth is obvious, isn't it?

Holmes

Then, for years I've ignored the most obvious signs.

Moriarity

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Your humble servant, Mr. Holmes. A government, any government must have a means of performing certain necessary acts that it can later disown. Now for that a professional network is usually created. But for some activities auxiliaries are required. You see before you the Commander of Her Majesty's auxiliary forces.

Holmes

Preposterous!

Moriarity

I hold the rank of Brigadier in the Service. My immediate superior is "M", the Head of Her Majesty's Secret Service.

Holmes

Preposterous!

Moriarity

You grow repetitious, my dear fellow. As it happens you know "M" quite well. But you know him better as your brother Mycroft.

(Enter Mycroft Holmes, large, sleek, fat, unlike the wiry Sherlock.)

Mycroft

It's true, Sherlock. Professor Moriarity is an agent of the Queen. I might add, a man who has proved himself indispensable on many occasions.

Holmes

And, does Her Majesty see fit to employ murderers?

Mycroft (complacently)

Occasionally. But we don't consider this to be murder. Admiral Kovalevsky was a military target. Kovalevsky was a chief of the Okhrana and one of the most effective Russian agents in Europe. He was responsible for torturing and murdering several of our best people. Therefore, Her Majesty's Government decided to pay him quits. **Moriarity** handles delicate matters like these for us. And very well.

(The lights blackout, then go up on Holmes and Watson.)

Holmes

So you see, Watson, even the best detectives can make mistakes. For years I had tracked Moriarity only to find out I was tracking my own brother, whose commands Moriarity faithfully executed. And that was why the Professor always eluded me, despite my best efforts. Always, there was an impediment, unforeseen, unforeseeable. I suspected he had protectors in high places—but how high, how high. The tool Moriarity employed to kill the Admiral thought he was performing a simple robbery for a master criminal. He hadn't the slightest notion he was working for Her Britannic Majesty.

Watson

But none of this explains the pictures, Holmes. How could you do such a thing?

Holmes

What on earth are you talking about? What pictures?

Watson

The pictures of Irene Adler.

Holmes

I know nothing of any pictures of Irene Adler. Bye the bye, she looked charming tonight.

Watson

You saw her?

Holmes

She wanted my cab, but I told her I was engaged.

Watson

Did she recognize you?

Holmes

Of course not. Now, what about these pictures?

Watson

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Holmes, how could you do such a thing—even for Queen and Country?

Holmes

Watson, are you mad? What are you talking about?

(Irene Adler has come in through the half open door. Suddenly she lurches towards Holmes with a stiletto.)

Watson

Holmes, look out!

Holmes

I have her, Watson.

Irene

I will kill you yet, if I live. You will pay for what you did to me— for what you did to my husband.

Holmes

Frau Adler, or I should say Mrs. Norton, I have no idea what you are talking about. Please calm yourself.

Irene

Calm myself? After you blackmailed me to become a spy and then caused my husband to commit suicide. That will calm me?

Holmes

I implore you to be calm. The last time I saw you or your husband was on your wedding day.

Irene

Do you hear him, Dr. Watson, this liar? If you are a gentleman, Dr. **Watson**, you will help me to avenge myself.
(Watson stands irresolute.)

Holmes (perceiving Watson's confusion)

Watson?

Watson (coming to a decision)

Frau Adler, I believe you were injured by someone. But, but, I know this is Sherlock Holmes, and I know he is not the man who injured you.

Holmes

Thank you, Watson. Now, Mrs. Norton, will you explain.

Watson

This poor, gallant woman has been blackmailed by a man purporting to be you, Holmes.

Holmes

Blackmailed! To do what?

Irene

To spy and to become the mistress of the King of Bohemia.

Holmes

What? Look carefully at me, Mrs. Norton. Are you sure I am the person who blackmailed you?

Irene

If it was not you, it was someone who resembled you greatly. I am no longer sure. There are certain subtle differences.

Holmes

It was Moriarity. I am sure of it.

Irene

But, why would this Moriarity, whoever he is, describe himself as you?

Holmes

The better to gain your initial confidence. Oh, he is a wonderful villain.

Watson

But, Holmes, you just told me he works for your brother Mycroft on special service.

Holmes

That makes him no less a scoundrel. For that matter, Mycroft is a scoundrel, if you come right down to it. Nothing would please **Moriarity** more than to blacken my name. Mrs. Norton, have you been victimized?

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(Enter Professor Moriarity dressed as Sherlock Holmes.)

Moriarity (in a voice almost identical to Sherlock's)

You are quite right. I took the liberty of entering without knocking when I saw Mrs. Norton come in. Do you approve of my disguise, Mr. **Holmes**?

Holmes

Moriarity, you will answer to me for this deception.

Moriarity

Tsk, tsk. I am under orders, my dear Sherlock. Take it up with your brother.

Holmes

You mean my brother authorized you to employ my name in a blackmail scheme?

Moriarity

I confess I did suggest it myself.

Holmes

Devil!

Moriarity

But he approved it. Calm down. Sherlock, you look as though you'll have apoplexy. We mustn't lose a great mind like yours to anger.

Holmes

Why have you come here?

Moriarity

I have some instructions for Mrs. Norton.

Irene

I no longer take orders from you.

Moriarity

Please, don't make it necessary for me to remind you of the consequences of disobedience.

Irene

I no longer take orders from you.

Moriarity

Do not be childishly stubborn. You have no choice.

Irene

I don't care. My husband is dead. You cannot threaten me.

Moriarity

Your husband was murdered.

Irene

What do you say?

Watson

Murdered? But he was a suicide?

Holmes

Did you murder him, Moriarity?

Moriarity

Me? No. What on earth for? I needed him to keep Mrs. Norton in line. But I know who did.

Irene (icily, but with restrained hysteria)

Who murdered my husband?

Moriarity

Why, the King of Bohemia, of course.

Irene

Why should he do that? I don't believe it.

Moriarity

Your husband, Alfred Norton, was hired by the King about the same time he engaged Sherlock Holmes. The King is not a complete fool. Norton was engaged to marry you, and keep you quiet, a job he succeeded in admirably.

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Holmes was assigned the rather more simple task of obtaining the photograph. Norton was the King's real trump. The King believes in having more than one string to his bow.

Irene

I don't believe it.

Moriarity

Oh, I think I shall convince you. Norton had instructions to kill you if you should continue in your attempts to expose His Majesty.

Irene

Not Alfred. He was so kind.

Moriarity

No, not Alfred. The man you married under that name is Arsene Lupin, the famous French criminal. He's a man of a thousand faces, you know.

Irene

No.

Moriarity

Do you know where your husband obtained his income from?

Irene

He had some money that he— Oh, it's true. His money always came from Bohemia.

Holmes

Why did the king kill Norton or Lupin then?

Moriarity

After the King resumed his affair with Mrs. Norton he felt Lupin's services were superfluous. Moreover, Lupin was in a position to blackmail the King. It's not the first time the King has paid off his agents in that coin.

Irene (dejectedly)

And I thought there was one man who loved me for myself alone.

Holmes (constrainedly)

Perhaps there is, Frau Adler, but it is not your husband.

Irene

Nonetheless, what has been done to me is despicable.

Moriarity

Agreed. But would it not be more despicable to permit a world war to break out when the means are at hand to prevent it? Those photographs which turned up when we disposed of Admiral Kovalevsky gave us the opportunity to place an agent of influence in the highest quarters of the country we call Bohemia. We could not turn our backs on that opportunity. Will you continue to work for us? I ask you in the name of all mankind.

(Irene hesitates and looks to Sherlock Holmes who remains impassive.)

Moriarity

I wish to return these photographs to you, Madame. Your work is too important to be continued under duress.

Irene

I will do so, and willingly.

Moriarity

I regret the necessity that forced me to play the part of a villain. The fate of the world rests on your success.

Irene (majestically)

War will not break out if it lies in my power to prevent it. (shaking hands all around she walks out proudly)

Watson

Magnificent creature!

Moriarity

A real heroine. Well, my dear Sherlock, I'd better be going. Pleasant seeing you again.

Holmes

One thing before you go, Professor.

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Moriarity

Anything for you, sir.

Holmes

The photographs, if you will.

Moriarity

What photographs?

Holmes

Why, the ones you did not return to Mrs. Norton. Now give them here, Professor, or I shall put a bullet in your unscrupulous brain. I should hate to deprive Her Majesty of your so useful services.

CURTAIN