

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN THE ADVENTURE OF THE MULBERRY STREET

From an original story by Frank J. Morlock

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SHERLOCK HOLMES IN THE ADVENTURE OF THE MULBERRY STREET IRREGULAR

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To Dagny, for all the help you've been to me in placing this and other works of mine on the internet. Frank Morlock

CHARACTERS, eleven men, one woman

Sherlock Holmes

Dr. Watson

Police Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt, President of the Police Board

Lincoln Steffens, a young reporter

Professor Moriarity

Mrs. Laura Avery

Dr. Parkhurst, a reform minister

Parker, a member of the Police Board

Clubber Williams, a police Inspector

Schmittberger, a police Inspector

Police Chief Byrnes

A Police Officer

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Scene I.

A hotel room in New York occupied by Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. Holmes is in a funk.

Watson

We've been cooped up in this bloody hotel room for several weeks, Holmes. Are you sure that Professor Moriarity is in New York?

Holmes

I'm positive he's here, Watson.

Watson

But why would he come to New York anyway?

Holmes

To keep out of my way.

Watson

Well, he's certainly gone to ground. Have you lost the scent?

Holmes (piqued)

It appears, Watson, we must simply await developments. Moriarity will announce his presence in some spectacular way. The man cannot be idle. Sooner or later he will pull off some criminal coup.

Watson

He seems to have managed to restrain his impulse so far.

Holmes

He's prudent. He's hoping I'll get tired and return to England. He underestimates my patience and his own need for action.

Watson

Well, I propose an excursion tomorrow while we wait for the Professor to give some evidence of his whereabouts.

Holmes

A capital idea, Watson. We may as well mix business with pleasure. At least until we can profitably do business.

Watson

I think it most inconsiderate of Moriarity to come to New York and then hide so cleverly.

Holmes

What better place than New York, Watson? The city is filled with people of all kinds and the government is so corrupt that even the police can be bought.

Watson

Yes, I've been reading about that. Well, there's a reform movement afoot.

(A knock at the door. Holmes gets up and opens the door, admitting Lincoln Steffens, a reporter.)

Steffens

Mr. Holmes, I presume?

Holmes

I am Sherlock Holmes and this is Dr. Watson.

Steffens

Of course. I should have recognized both of you instantly. I follow your adventures very closely as reported by the good doctor.

Holmes

I have not the same pleasure of knowing you, sir.

Steffens

My name is Lincoln Steffens. I'm a reporter.

Holmes

With the Evening Post?

Steffens

That's right. How did you know?

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Holmes

I've been reading your accounts of the reform of the Police. Quite excellent work.

Watson

Indeed, I've read them too.

Steffens

Some people say it's muck raking. I appreciate your praise.

Holmes

Unfortunately, Mr. Steffens, I do not grant interviews to the press.

Steffens

Ah, but you see, I am not seeking an interview, although I should be glad enough to have one.

Holmes

Indeed, Then, of what service can I be to you?

Steffens

The President of the Police Board requested that I contact you.

Holmes

Mr. Roosevelt? But I am engaged in the most urgent business at the moment.

Steffens

Are you pursuing Professor Moriarity?

Holmes

How could you know that?

Steffens

What else would bring Sherlock Holmes to New York City? We don't have any master criminals.

Holmes

You are certainly a very clever and engaging young man. I venture very few men in America have ever heard of Dr. Moriarity.

Steffens

The President of the Police Board has heard of him.

Holmes

This Theodore Roosevelt must be a remarkable man.

Steffens

He is, indeed. And, he is willing to offer you the assistance of the NYPD in apprehending Moriarity, if you would assist him in a small matter.

Holmes

I generally do not work well with the police, Mr. Steffens.

Steffens

Neither does the President of the Police Board, Mr. Holmes.

Holmes

I shall be delighted to meet the new President of the Police Board, and be of what service I can. But, I must warn you, that it is unlikely that I can devote much time to any other endeavour than the pursuit of Moriarity.

Steffens

The President understands your position, Mr. Holmes. He is willing to put his entire resources behind you, and to be of every assistance he can in your great enterprise. It could save you a lot of time.

Holmes

Still, police methods—

Steffens

The NYPD may be corrupt, Mr. Holmes, but they are among the world's finest.

Holmes

I mean no slight.

Steffens

Then, allow me to present Mr. Theodore Roosevelt, President of the Police board. (going to the door and admitting T.R., who bustles in, cigar in mouth, flashing his teeth) He asked me to make the introduction.

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T.R.

Holmes, Watson, welcome to New York. Good to see you, good to see you. We must get down to business right away. You must solve this mystery for us, Mr. Holmes. Meanwhile, I will undertake to put every available man on the lookout for Moriarity, and furthermore—

Steffens (amused at the somewhat aghast expression on the face of Holmes)

The President of the Police Board and the future President of these United States, T.R.!

T.R.

Now stop that, Steffens. I've told you before, I won't have that, even in jest.

Steffens

Certainly not, President Roosevelt. President Roosevelt has the theory that he must do his present job with absolutely no thought of the future.

T.R.

Without fear or favor. And stop calling me "President."

Steffens

I was referring to your position on the Police Board. Anyway, Mr. Holmes, he fears that if he thinks about the future, he will beat himself.

T.R.

Steffens is the most incorrigible, impudent fellow I've ever met— which is why he's just about the best reporter that ever lived—saving Jake Riis, of course. And he has the damndest ideas about human nature, too. Would you believe it, Mr. Holmes, he convinced me to keep the bag man for all the crooked cops on the take, because he says, mind you, that he's an honest man?

Steffens

Schmittberger is honest. That's why Tammany trusted him with the payoff money.

Holmes

Isn't this Schmittberger the one who testified at the Lexow Commission and turned state's evidence?

T.R.

He's the man. And you know what, he really is honest. He never kept a penny of that money for himself.

Holmes

Yes. And he kept very precise records of the officers he paid money to.

Watson

You mean this Schmittberger is still on the force?

T.R.

And I mean to keep him there. I've put him in charge of reforming the department. He knows who was on the take.

Watson

Well, it couldn't happen in England.

Steffens

It was the system that corrupted Schmittberger. He hated the system, and now he'll be loyal to us.

T.R.

He can be depended upon to clean out the grafters and to close down the saloons, the gambling dens, and the whore houses. I'd never have thought of that, if it hadn't been for Steffens.

Holmes

I begin to have a high opinion of you, Mr. Steffens.

T.R.

It's really Schmittberger we've come to see you about, Mr. Holmes. We think he's in great danger.

Steffens

He's received threatening letters.

Holmes

Surely, that's to be expected after his testimony implicating so many of his fellow officers and Tammany Hall.

Steffens

These are different in tone.

Scene I.

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T.R.

They've begun to worry him, and it's affecting his work. (giving Holmes some letters)

Holmes

They appear to have been pasted together from newspaper print.

Steffens

As a matter of act, I think they're from the Evening Post. It looks like our style to me. Unfortunately, we enjoy a wide readership.

Holmes

"Enjoy your sleep, Schmittberger. It may be your last. Did you hug your kids tonight? It may be your last chance. Death is near. Obacht." Obacht, what does that mean?

Steffens

It's German slang. It means watch out.

Holmes

You speak German, Mr. Steffens?

Steffens

Fluently. I was educated in Germany, Mr. Holmes.

Holmes

These letters offer little of real interest. The man who wrote them has a gift for saying things that are disturbing and designed to hurt the reader. Beyond that, I would think your best bet is to put on a mail cover. Pure police work, that.

T.R.

Except, that the police cannot be trusted in this case. That is why we came to you as soon as we found out you were in town.

Holmes

Do you have any individual suspects?

Steffens

Clubber Williams.

Holmes

And, who is Clubber Williams?

T.R.

He's a police inspector. He's famous for his brutality with a nightstick. Hence the nickname Clubber.

Steffens

To be blunt about it, the man's a sadist.

Holmes

Any others?

Steffens

Well, the present Police Chief, James Byrnes.

Watson

Why, doesn't this Chief Byrnes enjoy a great reputation as a detective?

Steffens

Almost equal to that of Sherlock Holmes. But he got it by cheating.

Watson

Got what by cheating?

Steffens

His reputation for solving cases. You see, he lets the criminals operate so long as they don't cause too much trouble. Say you had your pocket picked, and you're an influential person. You go to Byrnes. Byrnes says, "Don't tell anybody. I'll have your stuff back in a week." And a week later you get your stolen goods back. You think Byrnes is a master detective. But, what really happened. He calls in the leading pickpockets and says he wants such and such an item back. The pickpockets get together and find out who took it and tell him to give it back.

Watson (naively)

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Buy, why should they give it back?

Steffens

Because, if they don't, Byrnes will make it hot for all the pickpockets in the city.

Holmes

The ancient Egyptians had a system like that. You could buy back your stolen property.

T.R.

We haven't progressed much. Police protection should be available to everyone. Not just to those citizens who have influence.

Holmes

Any other suspects?

Steffens

Tammany Hall, the saloonkeepers, the proprietors of the gambling dens and the brothels—and last, but not least, the entire Police Department.

Watson

Hmmph. No end of suspects.

T.R.

Mr. Holmes, if you would give me a description of Professor Moriarity, I would circulate it immediately.

Holmes

That is perfectly useless.

T.R.

Why? Don't you know what he looks like?

Holmes

I know him very well. He is tall, thin, and emaciated—looking. I can only say that you will never see him like that. He is a master of disguise. Look for a short hunchback of decidedly stupid appearance and you will have your Moriarity.

(Enter Inspector Schmittberger; a tall impressive looking officer.)

T.R.

Schmittberger, what are you doing here?

Schmittberger

They told me you were here, sir.

T.R.

What has happened? You look upset.

Schmittberger

A man on a bicycle fired two shots at me as I was leaving O'Banion's saloon.

T.R.

Were you hit? Did you get him?

Schmittberger

No, sir, I wasn't hit. But, a bystander was killed. I didn't get him. The killer got away.

Holmes

How do you know the assassin was after you?

Schmittberger

He yelled at me. He called me a dirty stool pigeon and then he fired. This other poor chap was killed instead, poor devil.

T.R.

Did you get a look at him?

Schmittberger

Not a good one. He was around the corner almost immediately. I got my gun out, and ran after him, but he was lost in the crowd.

Holmes

Do you have any idea who was trying to kill you?

Scene I.

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Schmittberger

Some of the boys said they'd get me for turning state's evidence. But, I told them to come ahead. Let them come at me, fair and square. Even Clubber Williams is no match for me. I'll beat them all, and they know it.

Holmes

Are you sure it wasn't one of the police?

Schmittberger

I'd recognize any man on the force. I've never seen that man before. He was a total stranger.

T.R.

A killing for hire.

Holmes

Who was the man killed?

Schmittberger

A business man who frequents O'Banion's for lunch. I've seen him there many times.

T.R.

It would appear he might have better chosen to dine elsewhere.

BLACKOUT

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Scene II.

Roosevelt's office at Police Headquarters in Mulberry Street. The floor around Roosevelt's desk is covered with paper. Roosevelt is talking with Holmes, and reading a memo at the same time. As soon as he finishes the memo Roosevelt balls it up and tosses it over his head where it ends up in the same pile. Holmes and Watson look on, somewhat aghast.

T.R.

No doubt, you find Mulberry Street a contrast with Scotland Yard, Mr. Holmes.

Holmes

I seldom frequent the Yard.

(Roosevelt demolishes another memo, disposes of it rapidly, and picks up another.)

T.R.

I hate paperwork.

Holmes

Yes, I've noticed.

(Enter Dr. Parkhurst, a small bearded clergyman, accompanied by Steffens.)

Parkhurst

Steffens said I could see you, even though you were with someone, Mr. Roosevelt.

T.R.

Ah, Dr. Parkhurst, you know you can see me any time. This is a pleasure. Allow me to introduce you to Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. You've heard of them, I am sure.

Parkhurst

Yes, indeed. Very glad to meet you, Mr. Holmes, and you, Dr. Watson. We need a man like you in this city. Unfortunately, there are few mysteries worthy of your famous abilities. All we need really is a new broom—a man who will enforce the law.

Steffens

Dr. Parkhurst is the backbone of the reform movement.

Holmes

Indeed, I've heard of your exploits, Dr. Parkhurst. Is it not unusual for a clergyman to take such a concern in the suppression of crime?

Parkhurst

God announces his mission in strange ways, Mr. Holmes. It started when I began a youth group in my church. Young men. After a while they told me they were having a hard time living Christian lives because of all the temptations they were exposed to. I said what temptations? And they told me all about the saloons, and whorehouses, and the whole lot. I was naïve. These places were illegal. I went to the police and asked that these dens of iniquity be shut down. It took me quite a while before I realized that these places enjoyed police protection, and even longer before I realized that they enjoyed political protection. So, I became a reformer.

T.R.

And a damn good one.

Steffens

They're complaining about your tactics.

Parkhurst

It's hard to please criminals. You can never treat them in a manner that exactly suits their fancy.

T.R.

What brings you here?

Parkhurst

I've come on an unpleasant errand, Commissioner Roosevelt. I regret to inform you that there is still a certain reluctance to enforce the law despite the recent elections. Two saloons were open in violation of the Sunday

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closing laws last night. And, there are many bordellos that seem to be immune from all forms of attack. I was at one last night.

Watson

Good heavens—certainly you, a clergyman, didn't go frequent a place like that?

Parkhurst

Certainly, I did, Dr. Watson. How else am I to prove that it was open?

Watson

But surely, your position would not allow you to—

Parkhurst

Duty is duty, Dr. Watson.

Holmes

Dr. Watson is thinking of— I quite see your point, Dr. Parkhurst. But an Anglican minister—

Parkhurst

I am an Anglican minister—

Watson (shuttering and sitting down)

Are you, sir.

Parkhurst

If I rely on the reports of others, they say I am only listening to unfounded gossip and rumor. So, I go myself. I make a very good witness.

Holmes

Indeed, sir.

Watson

But, how do you prove that—that—prostitution was actually going on, unless you—GOOD GOD!

Parkhurst

My methods are very thorough.

Steffens

You see, Dr. Watson, in America we pass laws in the confident hope that the police will not enforce them. We are a very moral society. At that rate, we can afford to be.

Parkhurst

When I demanded the saloons and bawdy houses be closed, Mr. Holmes, the proprietors had the effrontery to say there was no need to change the law, because the law prohibited their activities anyway. When I demanded the law be enforced, they said it was impractical. Criminals always have an answer.

Holmes

I have found that to be true myself.

Parkhurst

Now, we have replaced the Tammany politicians with a reform administration. A new broom. We hope it will sweep cleaner than the old broom. Here is a list of the places that I can prove were open in violation of the laws. Good day, gentlemen.

T.R. (angrily)

Does he imply? Does he suggest—? Doesn't he understand that we're on his side?

Steffens

He's only on God's side.

T.R.

Damned impractical reformers. I'm doing all I can. But the fact is, it's hard to run against human nature.

Steffens

You see, Mr. Holmes, the honest working people of this city believe in observing the Sabbath. Hence, they passed a law that on Sunday, the saloons must close. But—

T.R.

But—as Sunday is their only day off, they want to have a drink or two.

Holmes

Which they are unable to do if the law is enforced. I perfectly understand. It's hard being moral and having a

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thirst, too.

T.R.

I'm doing my best. I'm doing my best.

(Enter Clubber Williams, a brutal looking man in the uniform of a Police Inspector.)

Williams Well—it's twelve o'clock, and I'm on time. So get it over with, shall we? (seeing Steffens) You here, too? I should have expected it.

Steffens

I told you I'd stay here until you were forced out, Clubber.

Williams

Isn't it enough you plan to dismiss me? You want to humiliate me, too—you buck-toothed devil. Enjoy your triumph. (grinding his teeth)

T.R.

I'll let that remark of yours pass—but only because you are under great stress, Inspector Williams. I summoned you here because I have to advise you that I have reviewed your record with the Police Force and the accusations made against you by Inspector Schmittberger and others. If you like, we can postpone this until I can speak privately—

Williams

Let them stay, let them stay—

T.R.

Then, I must inform you, that I find the charges made against you credible and well-substantiated. Therefore, I have determined as President of the Police Board, that you must be dismissed from the force. The dismissal is effective immediately.

Williams (tearing his medals off and grinding them under his heel)

After twenty-five years of service. All for bravery. And, they count for nothing.

T.R.

Your service record was taken into consideration. You will receive your pension. If you like, I will explain my reasons in detail.

Williams

That will be unnecessary. It's all because of that hypocritical Schmittberger. Good God, what fools we were to trust him—just because he looked like a cop. He—you'll live to regret this. Mark my words— Tammany Hall will come back to power in the next election. The people will soon be sick of all you goody-goodies. (exit Williams in a rage)

Holmes

Well, we seem destined to witness high drama today.

Watson

Was his service record good?

Steffens

Oh, excellent. If you discount his corruption and brutality. He earned the name Clubber by being the nastiest man on the force with a nightstick. You would be amazed from a medical point of view, Dr. Watson, what can be done to a man with a nightstick.

T.R.

In many ways, he was a good officer. His brutality was directed against street toughs—men much worse than himself, vile street criminals, who, unfortunately, only understand brutality. In Williams, they met a man who spoke that language fluently.

Watson

Still, you can't condone—

T.R.

I would have condoned it, much as I dislike it. But, I will not condone his corruption.

Scene II.

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Steffens

To my mind, taking the money was the least of his faults. Taking money from saloonkeepers to stay open on Sundays is regarded as white graft—a harmless way of supplementing a police officer's low salary.

T.R.

He's rich.

(Enter Parker, a dapper well-dressed little man. Roosevelt bristles immediately when Parker enters, like a horse in the presence of a snake. Parker is not in the least impressed by Roosevelt. The dislike is mutual, but somehow Parker always has the edge, and better control of his temper.)

Parker

I see you've done in poor Williams.

T.R.

I told you what my intentions were, Parker.

Parker

You should have consulted the other members of the Police Board. There are four of us, remember?

T.R.

I announced what I was going to do.

Parker

An announcement is not a consultation. Grant doesn't like it. (exits, turning on his heel)

Holmes

Who is he?

T.R.

That was Parker. He is also a member of the Police board—and the leader of the opposition to my policies.

Steffens

They don't like each other.

Holmes

An understatement.

T.R.

He thwarts me every way he can. And, by God, he is clever.

Watson

Does he work for Tammany?

Steffens

Oh, no—he just can't stand being less than first. Grant—you know he's the son of our former President—almost always sides with Parker.

Watson

Is this Grant an important person?

Steffens

He's a nonentity. Really, Parker is the great obstructionist. I told him privately what I thought of him. Enough to make most men ashamed, or ready to fight. All Parker said was—"Well, that has the virtue of being honest." I've never wanted to beat a man so much in all my life. He's insupportable.

T.R.

We can't stand each other. It's my character to say exactly what's on my mind. With Parker, I doubt if the left side of his brain would tell the right side of his brain what it was doing, even under a pledge of secrecy.

Steffens

He's devious and resourceful—and I can never figure out his motives.

T.R.

Bother Parker. Would you care to go out with me tonight, Mr. Holmes? I intend to see how the police are performing their patrol duties.

Holmes

That might prove interesting.

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T.R.

Meet me at my hotel at two A.M. Steffens will be there, too.

Watson

You can count on us.

BLACKOUT

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Scene III.

A dark street. On the left, a door to a tavern. By the tavern, an alley. On the right, a house with a red light in the window.

Tavernkeeper's voice

Now, where is that damn cop? I suppose he's gone off to sleep in the alley again!

(Enter T.R., Holmes, Watson, and Steffens.)

T.R. (overhearing the Tavernkeeper)

I'll fetch him for you!

(Suddenly, a woman screams from the alley. We see two men fighting. Roosevelt, Holmes, and Watson rush in. Roosevelt grabs at a man with a knife, who slips free and retreats into the alley and disappears.)

T.R.

The fellow is as slippery as an eel.

Holmes

He runs fast for a club foot.

Parkhurst

Don't pursue him, Mr. Holmes, these alleys are veritable rookeries.

Watson

Why, it's Dr. Parkhurst!

T.R.

What are you doing here?

Parkhurst

Visiting a brothel.

Watson

By Jove!

Parkhurst

In the line of duty, you may rest assured. It is one of several that still remain open.

T.R.

Where is it. I'll shut it down myself.

Parkhurst

It's over there. But we can discuss that later. First, we must look to this lady. She was being attacked by that scoundrel when I intervened.

Holmes

Are you all right, madam? Dr. Watson can attend you, if you are hurt.

Mrs. Avery I am perfectly all right. Dr. Parkhurst came to my rescue just in time, or I should be dead.

Parkhurst

Why—it's Mrs. Avery. Laura—what are you doing here? In such a neighborhood, and at such a time of night?

Mrs. Avery

I might ask you the same question, Dr. Parkhurst—but I am very glad to see you.

T.R.

This is no place for a lady. Why did you come here?

Mrs. Avery

I was following my husband.

Parkhurst

Mrs. Avery is a parishioner of mine. She's married to a man—a foreign gigolo by the name of Avery, and he has led her a very sad life. He is both insanely jealous, and totally unfaithful himself.

Mrs. Avery (weeping)

I received a letter this morning advising me, in the friendliest way, that my husband would be visiting Dolly

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Well's brothel tonight. I thought, rather foolishly, to catch him in the act.

Watson

Poor woman!

Parkhurst

Married to a brute!

T.R.

The hound deserves a good thrashing! But, it was hardly a wise decision.

Mrs. Avery

I shall be more prudent in the future.

Holmes

Did you recognize your attacker?

Mrs. Avery

No, no. It was some ruffian who thought to snatch my purse or—or—

T.R.

The dog. If I catch him—

Mrs. Avery

It happened just after I dismissed my cab.

Watson

Doubtless, he thought you—

Mrs. Avery

That I was one of Dolly's girls— Oh, sir, I am mortally ashamed.

Watson

You see where imprudence can lead a woman. In the future, you must consider the modesty of your sex.

Holmes

Strange, that he should have attacked you immediately after you dismissed your cab—almost as if he were waiting—

T.R.

Probably some drunk who saw his chance.

Steffens

More likely, he was waiting for some man to be his victim, and thought a woman presented less likelihood of resistance.

Holmes

Still—it's unusual. May I see the letter—

Mrs. Avery

What letter? Oh, that. I—uh—I no longer have it.

Holmes

Indeed?

Mrs. Avery

I tore it up after I read it. I was very upset.

Holmes

Of course. It was very lucky that Dr. Parkhurst was just coming out of Dolly's place.

Parkhurst

I am glad I was able to be of some assistance, Laura. But I am afraid he would have been too much for me, if it hadn't been for Mr. Roosevelt—and you, too, gentlemen. If you will allow me, Laura, I will accompany you home.

Mrs. Avery

I will be delighted. But my husband—

Parkhurst

I assure you, Laura, he wasn't there.

Mrs. Avery

Oh, why then, of course—

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Parkhurst (leading Mrs. Avery off)

I'll see you in the morning, gentlemen, and give you my full report.

(Exit Mrs. Avery and Dr. Parkhurst.)

T.R.

This is the strangest adventure I've ever had, gentlemen.

Watson

I see he meant what he said about personally investigating these hell holes.

T.R.

He's absolutely fearless.

Steffens

Dr. Parkhurst will go anywhere vice is practiced. He knows himself to be incorruptible and therefore he does things a more prudent man wouldn't even consider doing. He cannot stand corruption. It makes him mad.

Holmes

There's something more to this than—

(Before Holmes can finish this thought, he is interrupted by loud singing from the brothel. Enter Clubber Williams and Parker, arm in arm, bellowing out "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." Parker and Williams are happy and drunk. Roosevelt glares at them. When they see Roosevelt and company, the singing stops abruptly.)

T.R.

This is hardly conduct becoming a member of the Police Board, Parker. As for you, Williams, I would say it is in character.

Parker

I am simply trying to cheer up poor Clubber, on his retirement. A little innocent amusement.

Steffens

In a whorehouse?

Parker

They have an excellent piano player, and the drinks are the best in down. Honi soit qui mal y pense.

T.R.

You make me sick, Parker, you don't even have the decency to be ashamed.

Parker

Well, you can take your revenge, if you like. If you publish this, I shall have to resign.

T.R.

I have no intention of publishing this.

Parker (amused)

Really, why not?

T.R.

It's not my way.

Parker

I warn you, I would do it if I were in your shoes.

T.R.

I have no intention of publishing it.

Parker

Ah, but you will let your little reporter friend do it—a clever way to keep your conscience clean.

Steffens

I have no such qualms.

T.R.

Steffens, I'll strangle you, if you dare to publish this.

Steffens

But, Mr. President—

T.R.

Scene III.

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN THE ADVENTURE OF THE MULBERRY STREET IRREGULAR

I won't hear of it.

Parker

You're a damn fool. But, thanks a lot. Shall we go, Clubber? Evenin' gents.

Holmes

Before you go, Inspector Williams, I want to ask you some questions.

Williams

And who the 'ell may you be? I saw you this morning, but we weren't introduced.

T.R.

He's Sherlock Holmes—the English consulting detective.

Williams

And, what's he consulting about? How to fire me?

Holmes

I've been asked to look into the Schmittberger matter.

Williams

Oh, the stoolie.

Holmes

Are you aware there was an attempt on Schmittberger's life this afternoon?

Williams

Was there? I hope they got him.

Holmes

No. Another man—a bystander was killed. You have a very clear motive for making such an attempt.

Williams

As does everyone else on the force that trusted that Judas. Why should I do it?— I have my pension and my—uh—savings. No need.

Parker

You don't have to answer any questions, Clubber.

Williams

What does it matter?— I have an alibi.

T.R.

An alibi? You weren't even told when the attack occurred.

Williams

You think it's a secret? Everybody on the force knows about it. It occurred at two o'clock in front of O'Banion's saloon. Well, at that time I was consulting with Commissioner Parker and Commissioner Grant about my possible retirement. So forget that.

Holmes

Do you have any idea who might have done it?

Williams

Let me see. If I were investigating this case, I'd say the Police Commissioner himself had a very good motive.

T.R.

What? How dare you?

Williams

Schmittberger is an embarrassment to you—alive. You've kept on a man who is admittedly the bag man for Tammany. Dead—he's a hero and you can blame Tammany.

Parker

Our dear President of the Board isn't smart enough to do that, Clubber. No, that theory won't work. Now, I might do that—but I'm not in Mr. Roosevelt's shoes so I have no motive.

T.R.

Don't waste time talking with these scoundrels, Mr. Holmes, they will not provide you with any useful information.

Holmes

They may already have done so.

Scene III.

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN THE ADVENTURE OF THE MULBERRY STREET IRREGULAR

Watson

Even in this uncivilized part of the world, it is preposterous to believe that a public official would kill a man simply to help his own political cause.

Parker

It wouldn't be the first time. But, I think Steffens is behind it.

Steffens

What? You're insane.

Parker

It would sell some more newspapers. Evenin' gents.

(Exit Parker and Williams, laughing, into the alley. They begin to sing.)

T.R.

Of all the effrontery.

Steffens

Let me print it, let me print it.

T.R.

No. Or I'm done with you.

(Suddenly the singing stops. Parker and Williams return.)

T.R. (not noticing Parker and Williams)

Well, gentlemen, shall we continue our rounds?

Holmes

Lead on—Mr. Parker, what's wrong?

Parker

There's a policeman in the alley—with his throat cut.

Williams

I know him, too. His name is O'Hara. His job is to act as a bouncer at Dolly's and the saloon next door. He does a few rounds. He's an old man and would never hurt a fly. They cut his throat from ear to ear. (weeping, maudlin)

T.R.

Who would do such a thing?

Holmes

I can't prove it. But, I will venture a guess. The ruffian who was waiting for Mrs. Avery.

T.R.

But, why?

Holmes

Now, that is the mystery.

BLACKOUT

Scene IV.

Roosevelt's office, the next morning. An exercise horse and several other types of equipment have been added to the furniture. There is a noise of hammering. Roosevelt is by himself, doing some exercises, when Holmes and Watson enter.

T.R.

Ah, there you are, Holmes.

Holmes

Good morning, Mr. President.

T.R.

Excuse the disorder, I'm having a gymnasium installed in the next room, but the workmen haven't quite finished yet.

Holmes (as T.R. continues from one gyration to another)

Quite impressive.

T.R.

Would you like to wrestle?

Holmes

Wrestle?

T.R.

We can have a tumble right now, if you like. I have some mats.

Holmes

No thank you, I abhor all forms of exercise.

T.R.

You don't say! But, I understood you are familiar with the oriental martial arts.

Holmes

I have a slight acquaintance with jiu-jitsu and several other martial arts, but only for professional reasons. I much prefer to exercise my mind instead of my body.

T.R.

Is that so? (somewhat incredulous) Well, as you please. Perhaps you, Dr. Watson?

Watson

Thank you, no, Mr. Roosevelt.

T.R.

Well, perhaps you box?

Watson

No, no. I mean, yes I do, but, no, I'd rather not.

T.R.

Well, I shall just have to hire a sparring partner, I suppose.

Watson (aside to Holmes)

Maybe if we could get him to lie down, the fever for exercise would pass.

T.R.

Another murder was committed last night. Not far from here, either. A very strange case.

Holmes

Indeed. What happened?

T.R.

Someone murdered an organ grinder here in Mulberry Street. Brutal and senseless, and it's raising a lot of fuss here in Little Italy. The old man was very popular.

Holmes

What was the motive?

T.R.

Robbery.

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN THE ADVENTURE OF THE MULBERRY STREET IRREGULAR

Holmes

I would hardly think an organ grinder would have much money.

T.R.

They don't. At least, this one didn't. They stole his organ and his monkey.

Watson

But, that's the strangest thing I ever heard of. Is no one safe in this barbaric country?

(Enter Dr. Parkhurst.)

Parkhurst

Ah, Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. Holmes. I am very glad to see you here.

T.R.

About that brothel—

Parkhurst

Never mind that.

T.R.

Why, but I've—

Parkhurst

Mrs. Avery has disappeared. I saw her home last night. This morning, I called on the way here to see if she had recovered from her fright. Her maid said that directly after I brought her home, she changed clothes and went out again. She hasn't returned.

Holmes

You had better tell us all you know about Mrs. Avery.

Parkhurst

Really, I know very little. She joined my parish several months ago and became a member of the choir. She is very wealthy and married to a jealous Italian Prince or something.

T.R.

Married to an Italian. But, she uses an English name.

Parkhurst

He changed his name because it's difficult to pronounce. Anyway, he used to make scenes and accused his wife of having affairs with practically anyone she met. It was quite distressing. A madman, without a doubt.

Holmes

Go on.

Parkhurst

Naturally, she separated from him.

Holmes

And?

Parkhurst

She became friends with Sidney Gray.

T.R.

Sidney Gray?

Parkhurst

Yes. Why—

T.R.

But, that is the name of the man who was killed in the attack on Schmittberger!

Holmes

Now, I think we can begin to see to the bottom of this mystery.

T.R.

Do you? Well, I confess, I can't.

Holmes

And, how did Mrs. Avery's husband react to her friendship with Sidney Gray?

Parkhurst

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN THE ADVENTURE OF THE MULBERRY STREET IRREGULAR

He caused a row—or I should say several rows. Very distasteful.

T.R.

And, I believe he even accused you of some involvement with his wife, did he not?

Parkhurst (flabbergasted)

How did you know that? Yes, yes, he did.

Holmes

Tell me about Sidney Gray.

Parkhurst

He's a very well-to-do man. His family is socially quite prominent, but in a very quiet way. He took a great interest in the reform movement. It is a shame about his death—

Holmes

Sidney Gray was deliberately murdered.

T.R.

What? But, the bullet was intended for Schmittberger.

Holmes

Gray was the target of the attack, not Schmittberger.

T.R.

But, the threatening letters to Schmittberger?

Holmes

A ruse to divert suspicion from the person with a motive to attack Sidney Gray.

Watson

But, who would want to attack Sidney Gray?

Holmes

Why, Mrs. Avery's husband—who else?

T.R.

I see, I see. A love triangle. Jealous Italian husband. She may have been having an affair with Sidney Gray—

Parkhurst

I refuse to believe that. Sidney Gray was a man of high moral character—and rather naïve.

Holmes

So much the worse for him. He probably refused to be blackmailed.

Parkhurst

Blackmailed?

Holmes

Yes, of course. Don't you see that this wealthy lady with a jealous foreign husband is a kind of vaudeville routine? Mrs. Avery and her husband have used this many times before, I have no doubt.

Parkhurst

If this is true—

Holmes

You've met her husband?

Parkhurst

Yes. Several times.

Holmes

He's a clubfoot, is he not?

Parkhurst

That's true, that's true! But, how—

Holmes

How do I know? Because this pair are famous. He goes by the name Ricolletti. They've been active for some time on the continent. The woman poses as a wealthy American heiress who is estranged from her violent Italian husband. She joins a fashionable congregation. She's Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, by turns. A whole Ecumenical conference. After a short time, she allows herself to be compromised by some wealthy church member—frequently the minister.

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN THE ADVENTURE OF THE MULBERRY STREET IRREGULAR

Parkhurst

What an escape I have had!

Holmes

The jealous husband appears and catches the guilty lovers in the act. He threatens murder and exposure. This unsettles everyone. Finally, the woman proposes to give the worthless Italian some money to get rid of him. He's venal, and he agrees. Now, she proposes to pay him from her own money. But, her money is all tied up in spendthrift trusts. Could the lover advance the money himself?—she will pay him back.

T.R.

And, of course, that's the last one sees of either the lady or her husband.

Watson

How diabolical.

Parkhurst

The woman must be a viper. But, I can hardly believe that Laura—

Holmes

Believe me, Dr. Parkhurst, you've never met a woman in all your excursions into the cribs of New York who is her equal in vice and depravity.

T.R.

But, why was Gray killed?

Holmes

Gray is a wealthy man. I think we may assume that Mrs. Avery and Ricolletti had a falling out.

T.R.

And—

Holmes

Mrs. Avery decided to marry Sidney Gray, and to cut Ricolletti out. She may even have fallen in love.

Parkhurst

But, why has she disappeared?

Holmes

To avoid her husband. Ricolletti has already given signs that he doesn't like her little trick.

T.R.

And, last night—the ruffian—

Holmes

Exactly. The ruffian was a clubfoot!

T.R.

Then, it was Ricolletti.

Parkhurst

But, if she was trying to escape him, why would she follow him?

Holmes

He was following her, not she him.

Parkhurst

Why would she seek refuge in a brothel?

Holmes

Well, according to the information I have about Ricolletti's wife, that was where she began her career.

Parkhurst

Infamous! I trusted her. Excuse me, gentlemen, I am ill. (exits)

T.R.

I'll get every available policeman on the force looking for her.

Holmes

Do so—before she is killed as well. Ricolletti is both cunning and ruthless.

Watson

I hate to say this, Holmes, but could Parkhurst be involved? It was very singular his being in that part of town

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN THE ADVENTURE OF THE MULBERRY STREET IRREGULAR

with Mrs. Avery last night.

Holmes

The thought has crossed my mind.

(Enter Schmittberger.)

Schmittberger

Excuse me for interrupting Mr. Roosevelt, but there's been the strangest murder not two blocks from here.

T.R.

Out with it, man!

Schmittberger

A woman living in one of the Italian tenements has just been murdered by an organ grinder. She came to the window to listen to his music, and he stabbed her with a stiletto.

Watson

And, last night, an organ grinder was killed—

T.R.

Did you catch the madman?

Schmittberger

No, sir. He escaped.

Holmes

I'll wager, Mr. Roosevelt, that the dead woman is Laura Avery, and the organ itself belonged to the man killed last night.

Watson

But, what would Laura Avery be doing in a tenement?

Holmes

She probably thought it was safe to hide there. She speaks Italian.

T.R.

But, her husband's Italian—

Holmes

I'm not so sure of that. Well, we'd better go see.

BLACKOUT

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN THE ADVENTURE OF THE MULBERRY STREET IRREGULAR

Scene V.

A dark foggy street somewhere near the river. Several tenement houses.

(Enter Holmes and Watson.)

Holmes

Come, Watson. I think we have tracked Ricolletti to his lair.— Wait till I reconnoitre.

(Holmes steps stealthily forward, then encounters a figure. A fierce struggle ensues.)

Watson (lighting a lamp)

Commission Roosevelt.

T.R.

Sherlock Holmes! Is it you, Holmes? Well, I'm damned if I didn't take you for an Italian. What are you doing here?

Holmes

I might ask you the same question.

T.R.

I received a tip that a man resembling the supposed organ grinder was seen hereabouts. When I saw you loitering, I thought—

Holmes

No apologies. I have tracked Ricolletti here.

T.R.

Then, we have him.

Holmes

I believe he is in this house.

T.R.

I have no warrant.

Holmes

You Americans always have so many procedural difficulties. Watson and I will break in. You can say you observed us and followed us to apprehend us in the act.

T.R.

Bully!

Holmes

Eh?

T.R.

Bully!— It's an expression. It means splendid. By the way, you wrestle well for a man who abhors exercise.

Holmes

Thank you, very much. You do quite well, too. Shall we begin?

T.R.

After you, gentlemen.

BLACKOUT

Scene VI.

Holmes and Watson fling open the door. Moriarity is seated at a large handsomely appointed desk. The room itself is luxuriously furnished.

Holmes

Moriarity!

Moriarity

None other! Do close the door, Holmes, there's a draft. Good to see you again, Dr. Watson.

Watson

I am not aware that you and I have ever met, Professor Moriarity.

Moriarity

It does not surprise me, Dr. Watson, that you are unaware of it. But, we have met, several times, in fact.

Holmes

I am very fortunate. I knew you were in New York. Through tracing Ricolletti, I have happily killed two birds with one stone. Where is Ricolletti?

Moriarity

He's gone where you will never find him. He's under MY protection now.

Holmes

Your protection! You will soon be in jail, too.

Moriarity

On what charge?

Holmes

There are several charges pending against you in England.

Moriarity

Are there? I wired my solicitor this morning. None are pending.

Holmes

What about the Linden affair?

Moriarity

During your absence, and mine, from England the witnesses met with an unfortunate accident. Stung to death by a flight of killer bees. (laughing) You have no proofs against me anymore, Mr. Holmes.

Holmes

You fiend!

Moriarity

I knew you would follow me from England, my dear Sherlock. And, with you out of the way, I had this feeling that your case would somehow collapse.

(Enter Roosevelt.)

T.R.

Hands up. I am the police. I saw a break-in occur here. You too, Mr. Ricolletti. (brandishing a gun)

Moriarity

Ah, Commissioner Roosevelt, I presume? Professor Moriarity.

T.R.

Moriarity. Shall I arrest him, Holmes?

Holmes

Arrest him for aiding and abetting the escape of Ricolletti. Misprision of a felony.

Moriarity

I have not aided Ricolletti in escaping. He came here and left here of his own accord. There are several witnesses to that, who can be produced, if necessary.

T.R.

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If you are hiding a felon, I warn you—

Moriarity

I am not hiding him—and I gave him no money. I merely offered him some advice. Besides, he was under no charges when he entered here. His name has never been mentioned in the Press. If I am arrested, I shall be released within hours—and I will sue you for false arrest. My attorneys advise me that I cannot be charged.

Holmes

Is he correct, Mr. Roosevelt?

T.R.

I am afraid so, Mr. Holmes.

Holmes

Damn—what a fool I've been.

Moriarity

I assure you, I made it my business to enquire, Mr. Holmes. In fact, I remained here merely from a longing to see you again, after such a long time—and to advise you that I have taken an interest in this matter. If you wish to charge me, I am at your disposal. My attorney is in the next room. Mr. Williams—

(Enter Clubber Williams.)

Williams

At your service, Professor Moriarity.

T.R.

What!

Williams

As a retired police officer, I have opened my private practice.

T.R.

You're not licensed.

Williams

Yes, I am. I studied for the bar at nights, and passed a year ago.

Holmes

You win this round, Professor Moriarity. There will be others.

Moriarity

Of course there will. I promise you that. But, rest assured, you would never have found me, if I had not decided to appear before you. It may surprise you to know that until yesterday, I was lodged within two doors of you.

Holmes

I will track you down, I will track you down!

Moriarity

I am above your petty persecutions, Mr. Sherlock Holmes. You may seek me wherever you like.

Holmes

The duel will continue.

Williams

If you please, Professor, there's a point I would like to discuss with you privately.

Moriarity

You will excuse us, Mr. Holmes.

Williams

The Professor is my first client, you see, and a most distinguished one, so you see, I'm a little nervous, and I want to be very correct.

(Williams opens a door for the Professor.)

Holmes

The duel will continue.

Moriarity

Certainly, Mr. Holmes, certainly. Till next we meet.

Scene VI.

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN THE ADVENTURE OF THE MULBERRY STREET IRREGULAR

(Professor Moriarity and Williams exit.)

Holmes

Moriarity has made a fool of me, Watson.

T.R.

Clubber Williams is laughing at me, Mr. Holmes.

Watson (facing the audience as the light darkens)

Ricolletti was never found. Holmes eventually surmised that Moriarity had done away with him in order to possess himself of the blackmail hoard Ricolletti and his abominable wife had amassed. That seemed to be the likeliest explanation, for neither Holmes nor Roosevelt were able to find the least trace of him.

Holmes (facing the audience)

Watson, Watson, what a fool I've been. There was no Ricolletti.

Watson

No, Ricolletti?

T.R.

But, what do you mean?

Holmes

Ricolletti was Moriarity in disguise. A disguise so perfect that no one, not even I, recognized him. He has slipped the noose again.

Watson

Moriarity vanished as he said he would—but Holmes was soon on this track again. This time the trail led to Peking and the Boxer Rebellion. As for Roosevelt, he went on to become Secretary of the Navy, and then to pursue a distinguished career that led to triumph after triumph. But to Sherlock Holmes, he will always be the Mulberry Street Irregular.

CURTAIN