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Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Goose

By

MICHAEL MENENDIAN and JOHN WEAGLY

Adapted from

The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle

By

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Dramatic Publishing Company

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MICHAEL MENENDIAN and JOHN WEAGLY

Based upon *The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle* by

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

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(SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE CASE OF THE CHRISTMAS GOOSE)

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Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Goose was originally staged as a radio play by Raven Theatre in Chicago in December 2011.

Cast:

Mr. Henry Baker Larry Carani
Mrs. Oakshott.....Stacie Dublin
Dr. John H. Watson, M.D..... Frederick Harris
Peterson..... Dean La Prairie
Mrs. Windigate..... Sophia Menendian
Mrs. BreckinridgeJoAnn Montemurro
Sherlock Holmes.....Ian Novak
Announcer..... Kelli Strickland
James Ryder Anthony Tournis

Production Staff:

Director Michael Menendian
Stage ManagerCathy Darrow

Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Goose

CHARACTERS

SHERLOCK HOLMES: A consulting detective

DR. JOHN H. WATSON: Holmes' baffled friend

MR. HENRY BAKER: A highly intellectual man

PETERSON: Porter at the Raven Hotel

JAMES RYDER: Head attendant at the Hotel Cosmopolitan

JOHN HORNER: A plumber

CATHERINE CUSACK: Maid to the Countess of Morcar

MRS. HUDSON: Holmes' landlady

MRS. WINDIGATE: Landlady at the Alpha Inn

MRS. BRECKINRIDGE: Purveyor of fine geese

MRS. MAGGIE OAKSHOTT: Egg and poultry supplier

HOOLIGAN #1

HOOLIGAN #2

SCREECHING WOMAN

JUDGE BRADSTREET

BAILIFF

POLITE GENTLEMAN

COURTEOUS YOUNG LASS

NEWSPAPER VENDOR #1

NEWSPAPER VENDOR #2
PUBSTER
DRUNK PUB LADY
BEGGAR WOMAN
SHALLOT SALESMAN
HEN DEALER
CHRISTMAS CAKE COOK
CHESTNUT TRAFFICKER
CARRIAGE DRIVER

LOCATIONS

Sherlock Holmes' rooms at 221B Baker Street
The corner of Goodge Street and Tottenham Court Road
The Countess of Morcar's dressing room (and bathroom) at
the Hotel Cosmopolitan
A courtroom
The streets of London
The Alpha Inn
Covent Garden Market
Oakshott Farm at 117 Brixton Road

While not a “musical” in the strictest sense of the word, a few holiday songs interspersed throughout the play help add to the holiday feel and go a long way toward fleshing out scene transitions.

It is strongly recommended that if producing organizations wish to have musical interludes, music that is in the public domain be used. Raven Theatre and the playwrights will not be held liable for any music that might be used that is NOT in the public domain.

Live sound effects are also encouraged. These Foley effects can be performed by various cast members.

While there are 28 speaking parts, the play can effectively be done with an ensemble of 8 actors (5m., 3w.)

Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Goose

(At top of show there is a musical introduction into which DR. JOHN H. WATSON appears, well dressed for the holidays. He addresses the audience.)

WATSON. It was a crisp and brilliant winter's day in London in the year 1890. The church bells were ringing softly in the distance.

(SFX: Loud gongs.)

WATSON *(cont'd)*. I had called on my friend Sherlock Holmes at 221B Baker Street upon the second morning after Christmas, with the intention of wishing him the compliments of the season.

(WATSON starts to knock on the door. Before he can, SHERLOCK HOLMES speaks to him.)

HOLMES. Is that you, Watson?

WATSON. Indeed it is.

HOLMES. Come in! Come in!

(Lights up on 221B Baker Street. HOLMES sits in his chair, his thoughts elsewhere. Beside his chair is a pile of crumpled morning papers, evidently newly studied, near at hand. Also evident is a wooden chair with a hat hanging on the back. A third chair is in the room.)

WATSON enters.)

WATSON. I found my friend lounging in his chair by the crackling fire.

(SFX: Crackling of fire.)

WATSON (*cont'd*). Beside the chair was a wooden chair, and on the angle of the back hung a very seedy and disreputable hard felt hat, much the worse for wear. A rather large magnifying lens lying upon the seat of the chair suggested that the hat had been suspended in this manner for the purpose of examination. (*To HOLMES.*) You are engaged, perhaps I interrupt you. (*Starts to leave.*)

HOLMES. Not at all. I am glad to have a friend with whom I can discuss my results. The matter is a perfectly trivial one. You see this old hat?

WATSON. What of it?

HOLMES. There are points in connection with it, which are not entirely devoid of interest and even of instruction.

WATSON (*sitting*). I suppose that, homely as it looks, this thing has some deadly story linked on to it; that it is the clue which will guide you in the solution of some mystery and the punishment of some crime.

HOLMES. No, no. No crime. Only one of those whimsical little incidents which will happen when you have four million human beings all jostling each other within the space of a few square miles. Amid the action and reaction of so dense a swarm of humanity, many a little problem will be presented which may be striking and bizarre without being criminal. You know Peterson, the porter at the Raven Hotel?

WATSON. Yes.

HOLMES. It is to him that this trophy belongs.

WATSON. It is his hat?

HOLMES. No, no, he found it. Its owner is unknown. I beg that you will look upon it not as a battered billycock but as an intellectual problem.

WATSON. How so?

HOLMES. First, as to how it came here. It arrived upon Christmas morning, in company with a good fat goose, which is, I believe, roasting at this moment in front of Peterson's fire. The facts are these: About four o'clock on Christmas morning, Peterson, was returning from some small jollification and was making his way homeward down Tottenham Court Road.

(PETERSON staggers on somewhat drunk, from another part of the stage. He observes the following interaction between BAKER and the HOOLIGANS, which may happen on or offstage, depending on casting and the director's preference.)

HOLMES *(cont'd)*. In front of him he saw, in the gaslight, a tallish man, walking with a slight stagger, and carrying a white goose slung over his shoulder. As he reached the corner of Goodge Street, a row broke out between this stranger and a little knot of hooligans.

HOOLIGAN #1. 'Ello, guv'ner!

HOOLIGAN #2. What's that you got there?

HOOLIGAN #1. Why, it looks like a goose.

HOOLIGAN #2. And a fine, fat one, I do declare!

BAKER. I'm not looking for any trouble, lads.

HOOLIGAN #1. I like myself a bit of goose now and then.

HOOLIGAN #2. As do I, as do I.

WATSON. Not unusual in that area.

HOLMES. Indeed. One of the ruffians knocked off the man's hat.

(SFX: Hat being knocked off BAKER's head—Two pieces of wood?)

BAKER. You knocked off my hat!!!

HOOLIGAN #2. That's not all we're going to knock off if you don't hand over that bird.

HOLMES. The man raised his stick to defend himself and, swinging it over his head, smashed the shop window behind him.

(SFX: Glass crashing.)

HOLMES *(cont'd)*. Peterson rushed forward to protect the stranger from his assailants ...

PETERSON *(rushing toward BAKER)*. I'll protect you stranger!

HOLMES. But the man, shocked at having broken the window, and seeing an official-looking person in uniform rushing towards him, dropped his goose, took to his heels, and vanished amid the labyrinth of small streets which lie at the back of Tottenham Court Road.

WATSON. Understandable, but leaving Peterson to the hooligans?

HOLMES. The hooligans also fled at the appearance of Peterson.

HOOLIGAN #1. Let's run mate!

HOOLIGAN #2. What about the goose?

SCREECHING WOMAN *(off)*. What's goin' on down there. Police. Police!!!!

(SFX: Police whistle.)

HOOLIGAN #1. Forget the bloody goose!!

(PETERSON re-enters, carrying a goose, staggering off in another direction.)

HOLMES. Peterson was left in the field of battle with the spoils of victory in the shape of this battered hat and a most unimpeachable Christmas goose.

(Lights out on PETERSON stage area.)

WATSON. He surely restored the items to their owner?

HOLMES. My dear fellow, there lies the problem. It is true that "For Mrs. Henry Baker" was printed upon a small card which was tied to the bird's left leg, and it is also true that the initials "H. B." are legible upon the lining of this hat, but as there are some thousands of Bakers, and some hundreds of Henry Bakers in this city of ours, it is not easy to restore lost property to any one of them.

WATSON. What, then, did Peterson do?

HOLMES. He brought round both hat and goose to me on Christmas morning, knowing that even the smallest problems are of interest to me. The goose we retained until today, when there were signs that, in spite of the slight frost, it should be eaten without unnecessary delay. Its finder has carried it off, therefore, to fulfill the ultimate destiny of a goose, while I continue to retain the hat of the unknown gentleman who lost his Christmas dinner.

WATSON. Did he not advertise?

HOLMES. No.

WATSON. Then, what clue could you have as to his identity?

HOLMES. Only as much as we can deduce.

WATSON. From his hat?

HOLMES. Precisely.

WATSON. But you are joking. What can you gather from this old battered felt?

HOLMES. Here is my lens. You know my methods. What can you gather yourself as to the individuality of the man who has worn this article?

(WATSON picks up the hat and examines it.)

WATSON. It is a very ordinary black hat of the usual round shape, hard and much the worse for wear. The lining was of gold silk, but is a good deal discolored. As you remarked, the initials "H. B." are scrawled upon one side. It is cracked, exceedingly dusty and spotted in several places, although there seems to have been some attempt to hide the discolored patches by smearing them with ink.

HOLMES. And what can you see of its owner?

WATSON. I can see nothing.

HOLMES. On the contrary, Watson, you can see everything. You fail, however, to reason from what you see. You are too timid in drawing your inferences.

WATSON. Then, pray tell me what it is that you can infer from this hat? *(Hands the hat to HOLMES. To audience.)* He gazed at it in the peculiar introspective fashion which was characteristic of him.

HOLMES. That the man was highly intellectual is obvious upon the face of it, and also that he was fairly well-to-do within the last three years, although he has now fallen upon hard times. This may account also for the fact that his wife has ceased to love him.

WATSON. My dear Holmes!

HOLMES. He has, however, retained some degree of self-respect. He is a man who goes out little. Also, it is extremely improbable that he has gas turned on in his house.

WATSON. You are certainly joking.

HOLMES. I never joke. Is it possible that even now, when I give you these results, you are unable to see how they are attained?

WATSON. I must confess that I am unable to follow you. For example, how did you deduce that this man was intellectual?

HOLMES. It is a question of cubic capacity. A man with so large a brain must have something in it.

WATSON. The decline of his fortunes, then?

HOLMES. This hat is three years old. These flat brims curled at the edge came in around that time. It is a hat of the very best quality. Look at the band of ribbed silk and the excellent lining. If this man could afford to buy so expensive a hat three years ago, and has had no new hat since, then he has assuredly gone down in the world.

WATSON. Well, that is clear enough.

HOLMES. This dust, you will observe, is not the gritty, gray dust of the street but the fluffy brown dust of the house, showing that it has been hung up indoors most of the time.

WATSON. Your reasoning is certainly plausible. But his wife ... you said that she had ceased to love him.

HOLMES. This hat has not been brushed for weeks. When I see you, my dear Watson, with a week's accumulation of dust upon your hat, and when your wife allows you to go out in such a state, I shall fear that you also have been unfortunate enough to lose your wife's affection.

WATSON. He might be a bachelor.

HOLMES. Nay, he was bringing home the goose as a peace offering to his wife. Remember the card upon the bird's leg.

WATSON. You have an answer to everything.

HOLMES. I have an answer for everything? Not I—it's the hat. The answers are there, on the hat, plain as day! How many times have I told you, Watson, when you have

eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth!

WATSON. All right. All right. How on earth do you deduce that the gas is not turned on in his house?

HOLMES. Elementary, my dear Watson! One tallow stain, or even two, might come by chance; but when I see no less than five, there can be little doubt that the individual has come into frequent contact with burning tallow—walks upstairs at night probably with his hat in one hand and a guttering candle in the other. Anyhow, he never got tallow stains from a gas jet. Are you satisfied?

WATSON. Well, it is very ingenious. But since, as you said just now, there has been no crime committed, and no harm done save the loss of a goose, all this seems to be rather a waste of energy. *(To audience.)* Holmes opened his mouth to reply, when Peterson, the porter at the Raven Hotel, rushed into the apartment with flushed cheeks and the face of a man who is dazed with astonishment.

(PETERSON enters.)

PETERSON. The goose, Mr. Holmes! The goose, sir!

HOLMES. Eh? What of it, then? Has it returned to life and flapped off through the kitchen window?

PETERSON. See here, sir! See what my wife found in its throat!

(PETERSON slowly opens his fist. In the palm of his hand he reveals an oversized blue diamond.)

SFX: Scintillating music for the blue carbuncle—piano keys? Wind chimes? A triangle?)

WATSON. He held out his hand and displayed upon the center of the palm a brilliantly scintillating blue stone of such purity and radiance that it twinkled like an electric point in the dark hollow of his hand.

HOLMES. By Jove, Peterson! This is a treasure trove indeed. I suppose you know what you have got?

PETERSON. A diamond, sir? A precious stone? It cuts into glass as though it were putty.

HOLMES. It's more than a precious stone. It is *the* precious stone.

WATSON. Not the Countess of Morcar's blue carbuncle!

HOLMES. Precisely so. I ought to know its size and shape, seeing that I have read about it in *The Times* every day this week. It is absolutely unique, and its value can only be conjectured, but the reward offered of one thousand pounds is certainly not within a twentieth part of the market price.

PETERSON. A thousand pounds! Great Lord of mercy!

HOLMES. That is the reward, and I have reason to know that there are sentimental considerations in the background which would induce the Countess to part with half her fortune if she could but recover the gem.

WATSON. It was lost, if I remember all right, at the Hotel Cosmopolitan.

HOLMES. Precisely so, on December twenty-second, just five days ago. John Horner, a plumber, was accused of having absconded with it from the lady's jewel case.

(Lights up on another part of the stage. The Countess of Morcar's dressing room at the Hotel Cosmopolitan. JAMES RYDER leads JOHN HORNER into the room. HORNER carries a toilet plunger.)

RYDER. This is it, Mr. Horner. The Countess of Morcar's dressing room.

HORNER. Such luxury!

RYDER. She pays a pretty penny for this kind of lavishness, believe you me.

HORNER. I'm sure, being a Countess, it's just a drop in the bucket to the likes of her.

RYDER. Speaking of buckets and whatnot, let me show you the ... er ...

HORNER. Toilet?

RYDER. Yes. It has become quite ... well ...

HORNER. Distressed?

RYDER. Yes. Right over here.

(RYDER leads HORNER over to the bathroom. HORNER enters the lavatory while RYDER stays in the dressing room.)

HORNER *(off)*. All right, you. Let's see what you've got.

(SFX: Hand swishing around in a bucket of water.)

RYDER. Will you be needing me, then?

HORNER *(off)*. I can handle it from here.

RYDER. I'll be off. I have other rooms to attend to. It seems some guests can't let a day go by without complaining about something.

(HORNER's wet hand extends from the bathroom for a goodbye handshake.)

HORNER *(off)*. Good day to you, Mr. Ryder.

(RYDER awkwardly tries to get out of the room without touching HORNER's hand.)

RYDER. Yes ... I ... uh ... Good day. *(Exits.)*

HORNER *(off)*. Ah! Yes. Here's the difficulty.

(SFX: A plunger being plunged into a bucket of water.

HORNER pulls a long dirty rag out of the toilet and re-enters the dressing room.)

HORNER *(cont'd)*. That should do the trick. *(Exits.)*

HOLMES. When James Ryder, the head attendant, returned to check the upkeep of the room, he found that Horner was gone, and that the bureau had been forced open.

(RYDER returns.)

RYDER. Police! Police! Foul play in the Countess' dressing room!

(SFX: Law enforcement pandemonium! Police whistles! Sirens! Bells!

Lights down on the Countess of Morcar's dressing room at the Hotel Cosmopolitan.)

HOLMES. They caught up with Horner at his home. He struggled frantically, and protested his innocence in the strongest terms.

HORNER *(off)*. I'm innocent I tell ya. I'm innocent!!!

HOLMES. He was arrested that same evening; but the stone could not be found either in his rooms or upon his person. According to the witness testimony of Catherine Cusack, maid to the Countess ...