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Miss Holmes

By

CHRISTOPHER M. WALSH

Based on characters by

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE



Dramatic Publishing Company

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CHRISTOPHER M. WALSH

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Miss Holmes was originally produced by Lifeline Theatre in Chicago and premiered in 2016.

Cast:

Sherlock Holmes.....Katie McLean Hainsworth
Dorothy Watson Mandy Walsh
Lizzie Chapman/Peggy/Martha Kate Nawrocki
Elizabeth Garrett Anderson/
Mrs. Hudson/Eudora Featherstone..... Abie Irabor
Mycroft Holmes/Vagrant Christopher Hainsworth
Geoffrey Lestrade/Orderly #1Christopher Jones
Michael Stamford/Reginald/Orderly #2Michael Reyes
Thomas Chapman/Orderly #3..... John Henry Roberts
Edwin Greener/Superintendent.....LaQuin Groves
Understudies Rasell Holt,
Jhenai Mootz, Tim Newell,
Siobhan Reddy-Best, Timothy Sullivan

Crew:

Director Paul S. Holmquist
Assistant Director..... Emily Wills
Stage ManagerBecky Bishop
Assistant Stage Manager.....Morgan Gire
Scenic Design..... Ashley Ann Woods
LightsJordan Kardasz
Original Music & Sound.....Andrew Hansen
Costumes..... Rachel M. Sypniewski
PropertiesHolly McCauley
Dialect Coach..... Elise Kauzlaric
Fight Choreographer Greg Poljacik
DramaturgMaren Robinson

Miss Holmes

CHARACTERS

SHERLOCK HOLMES

DOROTHY WATSON

LIZZIE CHAPMAN: a young wife

EUDORA FEATHERSTONE: an elderly, grieving mother

MRS. HUDSON: Sherlock's disapproving landlady

ELIZABETH GARRETT ANDERSON: first woman to qualify
as a doctor in England

PEGGY: a maid

MARTHA: a washerwoman

MYCROFT HOLMES: Sherlock's older brother

GEOFFREY LESTRADE: a Scotland Yard detective

THOMAS CHAPMAN: a Scotland Yard detective

MICHAEL STAMFORD: a doctor

EDWIN GREENER: an army veteran and petty criminal

REGINALD: Eudora's nephew

SUPERINTENDENT

ORDERLIES #1-3

A VAGRANT

VARIOUS LONDONERS

SETTING: London, circa 1881

For Mandy

Dedicated to the members of
#NotInOurHouse, A Chicago Theatre Community

Lizzie Chapman, newest wife of the feared and respected Inspector Thomas Chapman of Scotland Yard, receives an anonymous note warning her that her life may be in danger at the hands of her new husband. Unable to go to the police, Lizzie must look elsewhere for help...

BETHLEM ROYAL HOSPITAL

(The scene shifts to an insane asylum. The sounds of the inmates are heard through the walls. A certain Mr. Holmes [MYCROFT] waits.)

The SUPERINTENDENT enters, with ORDERLY #1 right behind him. ORDERLY #1 sports an impressive black eye.)

SUPERINTENDENT. Mr. Holmes? Oh, Mr. Holmes? I am Superintendent Ellis, sir. I was the one who—

MYCROFT. Where is she?

SUPERINTENDENT. Oh. Yes, of course.

(The SUPERINTENDENT signals to ORDERLY #1, who exits.)

SUPERINTENDENT *(cont'd)*. Forgive me, Mr. Holmes. I certainly would have communicated with you sooner if I had any idea of the identity ...

MYCROFT. You have her paperwork?

SUPERINTENDENT. Here, sir.

(The SUPERINTENDENT hands a packet of papers to MYCROFT.)

SUPERINTENDENT *(cont'd)*. You will see, Mr. Holmes, that per your request her real name does not appear anywhere. She was a Jane Bloggs when she came to us, and shall remain so for as long as you require it. Um ... how long will you require it?

(MYCROFT hands the SUPERINTENDENT an envelope stuffed with several bills.)

SUPERINTENDENT *(cont'd)*. I see. That is quite a long time, I assure you. Are you certain, sir, that you wish to take her into your own custody? I ask because, well, it became necessary to restrain her—

MYCROFT. Restrain her?

SUPERINTENDENT. For her own safety, sir. If you've seen the police report, you know that she put up quite a struggle when she was first detained.

MYCROFT. I'm not surprised.

SUPERINTENDENT. And since she's been here ... Well, perhaps you are aware that she grows quite agitated if someone gets too close to her. We had a minor incident. It took some effort to restrain your ... ah ... Well, the straitjacket was intended to prevent any further disturbances.

MYCROFT. A straitjacket? And she kept it on? That was unusually helpful of her.

SUPERINTENDENT. Helpful, Mr. Holmes?

MYCROFT. Indeed. A mere straitjacket is no restraint for her whatsoever, and if she remained confined after you placed her in one, then she did so of her own free will, for her own reasons.

(Sounds of shouting and struggling come from offstage.)

MYCROFT *(cont'd)*. Ah. Here we are.

(ORDERLY #1 returns, struggling with a woman [SHERLOCK] whose movement is hampered by a straitjacket. Her face is badly bruised. She stops fighting when she sees MYCROFT.)

SHERLOCK. Oh. It's you.

MYCROFT *(to the SUPERINTENDENT)*. Explain these bruises.

SUPERINTENDENT. As I said, sir. It took some effort to—

MYCROFT. Remove the restraints. Now.

(The SUPERINTENDENT signals to ORDERLY #1, who approaches the woman. As he reaches for the restraints, he whispers in her ear.)

ORDERLY #1. See you soon, sweetheart.

(The woman raises her knee straight into ORDERLY #1's groin. He doubles over, and she smashes his face with her forehead. ORDERLY #1 falls to the ground, hands over both his nose and his genitals.)

MYCROFT. Enough! Are you quite finished?

SHERLOCK. Just a moment.

(With no difficulty whatsoever, the woman shrugs out of the straitjacket. She holds it out for the bewildered SUPERINTENDENT to take.)

SHERLOCK (*cont'd*). There we are. Shall we go, Mycroft?
MYCROFT. Come along, Sherlock.

(They exit, leaving the SUPERINTENDENT and injured ORDERLY #1 behind them.)

SHERLOCK AND MYCROFT

(The scene shifts to MYCROFT's carriage. MYCROFT and SHERLOCK enter. MYCROFT offers SHERLOCK his coat, which she reluctantly takes and wraps around herself.

They sit opposite each other in awkward silence as London in 1881 passes by outside.)

MYCROFT. You were gone nearly a fortnight this time. That's a record, I believe. (*Waits for SHERLOCK to respond. She doesn't.*) What exactly were you trying to accomplish this time? (*Pause.*) Do you even recall where you were when the police came? You broke a young man's arm. I assume he tried to touch you. (*Pause.*) I fail to see how these so-called "clients" of yours can possibly be worth all this trouble.

(SHERLOCK looks at MYCROFT. She considers fighting, then decides it isn't worth the effort.)

MYCROFT (*cont'd*). If you moved back home you could avoid situations like this. If you stayed with people who were aware of your requirements. (*Pause.*) I wish I knew why you hated me so.

SHERLOCK. Don't be melodramatic, Mycroft.

MYCROFT. I can't see how else to interpret your behavior.

There must be some reason for these outbursts.

SHERLOCK. My reasons are my own.

MYCROFT. Sherlock, I can't keep doing this. You know my position. My work with the government requires—

SHERLOCK. Don't mince words. You *are* the government.

MYCROFT. My work with the government requires a degree of discretion that is difficult to maintain when I have to drop everything to hunt you down, cover your tracks and repair whatever damage you may have caused whenever you go off on one of your tantrums.

SHERLOCK. I am not a child, Mycroft.

MYCROFT. Alas, no. If you were, explaining your behavior would be far easier, and far less expensive to keep quiet.

SHERLOCK. Is that what I am to you? A business expense?

MYCROFT. Surely you weren't expecting sentiment?

SHERLOCK. Of course not, Mycroft. Don't be vulgar.

MYCROFT. Then let me make one thing quite plain. I will not let you undermine my work. If you will not conform to the standards expected of you, I am prepared to take drastic measures.

SHERLOCK. What? Back to the asylum again?

MYCROFT. I would be well within my rights.

SHERLOCK. When will you learn that escaping from such a place poses no challenge for me?

MYCROFT. It might, if I advise them on the best methods for keeping you contained.

SHERLOCK. You wouldn't.

MYCROFT. Oh, so you do expect some sentiment, after all. I thought we both were above such trivial qualities. How disappointing.

(They sit in silence. SHERLOCK raises an exploratory hand to her bruised face.)

MYCROFT *(cont'd)*. Does it hurt?

SHERLOCK. Just take me home, Mycroft. Please.

MYCROFT. I imagine Mrs. Hudson will have a thing or two to say about your appearance.

SHERLOCK. I will deal with Mrs. Hudson.

MYCROFT. You may want to have someone look at that. Just in case.

SHERLOCK. Thank you for your concern, Mycroft. I shall speak to Dr. Anderson.

MYCROFT. Anderson? One of those women doctors from that school?

SHERLOCK. You know perfectly well who she is.

MYCROFT. Suit yourself. *(Calls forward.)* Driver! Change of plans. We won't be returning my sister to Baker Street right away. Take us to the Royal Free Hospital. The London School of Medicine for Women.

(The carriage disappears into the London traffic.)

THE ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL

(The scene shifts to a hallway at the Royal Free Hospital. MICHAEL STAMFORD sits, reading a paperback novel. He seems pleasantly engrossed by it.)

Dr. DOROTHY WATSON enters, angry. She wears a surgical smock covered in blood. She wipes her hands in a bloody towel.)

WATSON *(not seeing STAMFORD)*. Bloody buggery bollocks!

(*STAMFORD jumps up, startled.*)

STAMFORD. Oh! Dorothy! I say!

WATSON. You say what?

STAMFORD. I just ... Well, I ... Sorry. "Dr. Watson." I know how particular you are about that. Bad day, is it?

WATSON. Why, Dr. Stamford, what on earth would possibly give you that idea?

STAMFORD. Um ...

WATSON. Yes, Michael, it is bad day. Pray pardon my unladylike outburst. Just ... bollocks.

STAMFORD. May I ask?

WATSON. Sepsis. An infection after an abdominal hysterectomy.

STAMFORD. I see. And your patient ... ?

WATSON (*shakes her head*). Would probably have been fine if anyone had told her to come in at the first sign of a fever. But by the time they finally got her here most of her colon and small intestine was necrotic, and her lungs were riddled with infected tissue.

STAMFORD. Why on earth didn't she come in right away?

WATSON. Oh, she couldn't come right away, see, because her husband would have been "cross" if he'd returned home from work to find her gone from the house. Mrs. Pertwee. That was her name.

STAMFORD. Well, that is unfortunate. But I imagine you must see a lot of that sort of thing here.

WATSON. Yes, Michael, I see quite a lot of that sort of thing here.

STAMFORD. I think perhaps I've come at a bad time. Perhaps I should—

WATSON (*noticing the book*). What is that?

STAMFORD. Oh this? Just a book. *The Fellow Travellers* by D.W. Graham.

WATSON. You're reading D.W. Graham? You surprise me, Michael. I would not have taken you for a fan of novels about young women studying medicine.

STAMFORD. Yes, well, you know. Mother read it, said she thought I'd learn something from it. Not sure why. Rather silly stuff, to be honest.

(WATSON's expression drops.)

WATSON. Oh. Well. I'm afraid I can't talk long. What brings you all the way down to the Royal Free Hospital?

STAMFORD. Well, I wanted to discuss the letter you sent to Mother.

(WATSON halts.)

STAMFORD *(cont'd)*. If you needed money, I wish you had come to me.

WATSON. If *I* needed—? Did you even read the letter?

STAMFORD. Read Mother's correspondence? Don't be silly.

WATSON. What exactly did she tell you?

STAMFORD. Just that you'd written, and something about needing money. Makes sense. That awful boarding house you live in. *(Seeing WATSON's expression.)* I'm only saying I understand how hard it can be, for a woman in your position. With your parents gone, and that unfortunate business with your brother—

WATSON. I am not comfortable having this conversation with you.

STAMFORD. She only wants what's best for you, as I do.

WATSON. The money wasn't even for me. I was hoping she'd make a donation to the school.

STAMFORD. The school? Oh! Yes, well, I can see why you might need ... (*Again off WATSON's look.*) Anyway, I have a counteroffer.

WATSON. Oh?

STAMFORD. Yes. I wish to renew my proposal.

WATSON. What proposal? (*Pause.*) Michael, you can't mean—

STAMFORD. I do.

WATSON. That was eight years ago.

STAMFORD. Nine, almost.

WATSON. That was before I left for Edinburgh.

STAMFORD. Yes.

WATSON. I thought you were joking. You said you were joking.

STAMFORD. No; you said I was joking and I agreed because it was less embarrassing that way. But wait. Let me do this properly.

(STAMFORD kneels.)

WATSON. Oh please don't.

(STAMFORD takes WATSON's hand.)

STAMFORD. Dorothy Watson, I asked once before, and now I ask again: Will you marry me?

WATSON. Couldn't we do this in private?

STAMFORD. It wouldn't be proper. I'll admit, a hallway at a place like the Royal Free is not quite ideal, but it's becoming damned difficult to find you anyplace else.

WATSON. I don't know what to say. Have you been waiting for an answer for eight years?

STAMFORD. Almost nine.

WATSON. I ... Michael ...

STAMFORD. Bear in mind the offer has improved a bit in that time. I have a proper practice now. Good income. You wouldn't need to work.

WATSON. And what would I do instead?

STAMFORD. Run the house, of course.

WATSON. Run the house? Michael, look at me! (*She indicates her gore-stained smock.*)

STAMFORD. Yes, precisely! I'm offering you a chance to put all of this unpleasantness behind you.

WATSON. What about this picture makes you think I would give it all up and "run your house" instead?

STAMFORD. I believe there are many women who would jump at the chance.

WATSON. Then why don't you ask one of them?

STAMFORD. Dorothy, be realistic. This can't go on forever. You should hear what people say about this place!

WATSON. I am quite aware of what is said about this place.

STAMFORD. Look, obviously this was the wrong time to broach the subject. I just ask that you take a moment to consider it. I don't expect an answer right now. I've waited eight years—

WATSON. Almost nine.

STAMFORD. I suppose I can wait a little longer. But not forever. We are neither of us growing younger, after all.

WATSON. No. No, we are not.

(*Dr. ELIZABETH GARRETT ANDERSON enters.*)

ANDERSON. Doctor Watson, I wonder if I might— (*Sees STAMFORD kneeling.*) Oh. Hello.

WATSON. Dr. Anderson! Forgive me. Dr. Stamford was just leaving.

(STAMFORD stands.)

STAMFORD. Yes. Well. I really should be getting back. But I do hope we can resume this conversation soon.

WATSON. I will think about what you have said. Good day, Dr. Stamford.

STAMFORD. Dorothy. Mrs. An—Er, Dr. Anderson. Good day. *(Exits.)*

ANDERSON. That was painfully awkward. I'm so glad to have witnessed it.

WATSON. He's offering to rescue me from this place by marrying me.

ANDERSON. Better women than you have been enticed by just such a proposition.

WATSON. Would you be?

ANDERSON. I'm not the one looking for a way out.

WATSON. Oh, no. That's not it at all. It's just ... Mrs. Pertwee died on that table today because she was too afraid of what Mr. Pertwee would do if things weren't to his liking when he got home. And she's hardly the first.

ANDERSON. I am aware.

WATSON. Shouldn't we be doing something about that?

ANDERSON. What exactly did you have in mind?

WATSON. I wish I knew. This is the London School of Medicine for Women. The only school of its kind in all England. We should be making a difference.

ANDERSON. Aren't we?

WATSON. I don't know.

(ANDERSON studies WATSON.)

WATSON *(cont'd)*. Is something wrong, doctor?

ANDERSON. Hmm. Will you accompany me, Dr. Watson? I have a patient waiting for me, and I would appreciate your opinion.

WATSON. You want *my* opinion? Yes, of course, Dr. Anderson.

ANDERSON. Well, let's get you cleaned up, and then follow me.

(They exit.)