

The Real McCoy

**A comedy mystery
in one act**

by Dave Buchanan

Spotlight Publications

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All enquiries to Spotlight Publications, 259 The Moorings, Dalgety Bay, Fife, KY11 9GX, tel. 01383 825737.

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The Real McCoy

CAST (in order of appearance)

Henry Coombes/Sherlock Holmes, 50s

George Watts/Doctor Watson, 50s

The Vicar, 40-50

Ellen Kenworthy, the daughter, 35-45

Sangster, the business partner, 60s

Mary, the widow, 60s

Wiggins, the street urchin, 10

Setting - London, a sitting room

Time - the present, in midsummer

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1 - the sitting room of a modern house

Scene 2 - Holmes & Watson's lodgings in Baker Street

Scene 3 - an interview room at Scotland Yard

Scene 4 - front of stage

Scene 5 - as Scene 1

Scene 1

It is midsummer, one p.m.

The setting is the sitting-room of a modern house. The décor is restrained, but well-to-do. CR is a coffee table with a settee above it. A sideboard or bookcase UR with ornaments, including an urn, and a picture above it. UL are patio doors with an area of decking visible; on the decking, some pot plants. Magazines and a bowl of peanuts on the table

George Watts, dressed in a dark suit, emerges from R with a glass in his hand, looks round and sips from the glass. Then he takes some peanuts and looks anxiously off L. Decisively he places the glass on the table, crosses to L and exits

The Vicar, in grey suit and dog-collar, enters R with a glass of whisky in his hand and looks round. Seeing no one in the room, he gulps down the whisky greedily. He takes out a packet of cigarettes, then exits UL through the patio doors

Ellen Kenworthy, also wearing sombre clothes and with a handbag and a glass in her hand, enters by the door R, and walks to C sipping from the glass. She puts the glass on the table then takes out a cigarette packet and looks at it nervously

Sangster, who is dressed all in black and dark glasses, enters by the door R (with a glass). The two of them shift uneasily away, barely nodding and respecting each other's space

Henry Coombes (in a dark suit) enters by the door R with glass in hand, and after glancing at his companions, neither of whom he apparently knows, stands upstage of them half-smiling at them and giving the barest of nods

Ellen takes out her cigarette packet again and exits through the patio doors. Sangster immediately exits R. Henry reacts by shrugging his shoulders in a was-it-something-I-said? gesture. He drinks deeply from his glass. Then he sits on the settee and flicks through a magazine

We hear a toilet flush, then George emerges L from the bathroom, and picks up his glass from the table

George By heck I was needing that, Henry.

Henry Did we really need to know, George?

Pause

George Good do. (*Sits with Henry*)

Henry Eh?

George The - you know.

Henry Oh. (*Pause*) What's good about it? Not a lot of laughs.

George I know that, but it's good. You know, good company, smoked salmon sarnies, free drink -

Henry Yeah, there's always that.

George In a way, we *are* celebrating -

Henry Celebrating what?

George (*shrugs*) The life of the deceased.

Henry Old Martin? Pity he's not around to celebrate with us. Martin's celebrating days are over. He's gone to that great celebration-free place in the sky.

They sigh almost in synch

George I suppose we're celebrating being alive.

Henry Damned right we are. I'll drink to that.

They toast glasses

George Did you know Jack Fellowes died last week? *(Rises)*

Henry Ohmygod. *(Rises)*

George Fifty four. Choked to death. Fishbone stuck in his gullet.

Henry Ohmygod.

They both swig their glasses, then move downstage

George Martin was sixty one, wasn't he?

Henry Thereabouts. You know, George, you hear people say, "It'll never happen to me, I could just as easily fall off a ladder". And blow me, that's exactly what Martin did.

George Yeah. Heart attack, lost his balance, fell off a ladder, cracked his skull on a paving slab. No more Martin.

Henry And I'm thinking, did we ever really know him?

George Course we did. Played golf with him for the past three years.

Henry Yeah, I know we did -

George Played bridge in the clubhouse with him. He was good at bridge and golf - bit of a bandit - drove a BMW -

Henry A *new* BMW every year. He knew how to impress.

George I know what you mean, Henry. We didn't actually know much about him. He never mentioned his wife and kids, though obviously he had both, 'cause we saw them in the chapel today.

Henry And what was his job? He never mentioned that.

George The Vicar said he was an *entrepreneur* - whatever that is -

Henry Could mean anything.

George Bit of a mystery man, our Martin.

Pause

I wonder if he went up or down?

Henry You what?

George You know - *(gestures)* up or - *(points down)*

Henry The latter, I think.

George Poor Martin. Suffering hellfire and damnation.

Henry Maybe. But one thing's for sure. He won't be lacking for company! If he's gone down.

George Yeah, half the bloody golf club'll be there for starters!

They laugh

Henry Well, it's time to go and rejoin the other mourners.

George You mean, get a refill?

They both laugh as Henry exits R

George takes a peanut and sits as the Vicar enters UL through the patio doors with a packet of cigarettes in his hand

Vicar Hello there.

George Oh hello, Vicar. *(Rises)*

Vicar Little weakness of mine.

George What?

Vicar *(indicating the packet)* The dreaded weed.

George Oh.

Vicar I've tried to give up but -

George The flesh is weak?

Vicar Precisely. I'll give up one day. Just the sight of a cigarette packet these days is enough to put -
George The fear of God in you?
Vicar I was going to say, the wind up. (*Moves DL*)

Pause

George I liked your speech. (*Moves DC*)
Vicar What?
George Your speech today. At the chapel.
Vicar You mean the eulogy.
George The what?
Vicar Eulogy. A speech in praise of the dead.
George Oh. Anyway, it was good. What you said about Martin.
Vicar *De mortuis nil nisi bonum.*
George You've got me now.
Vicar 'Speak nought but good of the dead'.
George Oh I see, Latin.

Pause

I was just saying to my friend Henry, that we didn't really know Martin. You obviously know a lot more about him than we do.
Vicar Not really.
George You must have known him well. Going by what you said in the - eulogy?
Vicar I didn't know him at all. Never met him, in fact.
George Then how -
Vicar The widow provided the information. You see, Mr -
George Watts. George Watts. Call me George.
Vicar You see, George, I'm employed by Sunset Fields Chapel of Rest. I've done three services today already. I've another two later on.
George Blimey, it's almost like a conveyor belt.
Vicar You could say that. But even though I didn't know the deceased, I still feel I'm providing a valuable service. It's the presence of the church, you see.
George Oh yes?
Vicar Yes. You see, George, people feel greatly comforted. At a time of stress they need something.
(*Laughs*) Like a good stiff drink, for example!
George Or a cigarette?
Vicar Yes, quite.
George But it was a good eulogy, I must admit.
Vicar Thank you. Now I must get back.
George I'll come with you. (*Motions*) After you.
Vicar (*motions*) No, after you.

George exits R followed by the Vicar

Ellen enters through the patio doors. She picks up her glass from the table and moves to DL, fidgeting nervously

Henry enters R with a full glass, sits on the settee and picks up a magazine

He notices Ellen

Henry Good do.
Ellen Pardon?
Henry Do, get-together, shindig. As in social function after funeral.
Ellen (*Australian accent*) Oh wake, mate! That's what you mean, the wake.

Henry (*rising and pointing*) You're - don't tell me - Australian.

Ellen Well spotted, mate.

Henry It's the Strine.

Ellen Strain? Yeh I know, mate, everyone's under a lot of strain.

Henry No no, Strine. You know, Australian twang. You've got it.

Ellen Yeh well, I would, mate, coming from Brisbane.

Pause, during which they both sip from their glasses

Lepers.

Henry I beg your pardon?

Ellen Lepers. They treat us like lepers, mate.

Henry Do they really?

Ellen We're a dying breed, you know. Smokers.

Henry That's for sure.

Ellen I blame the Yanks.

Henry Oh yes?

Ellen The States, Ireland, Scotland - next year Australia.. Mark my words, mate.

Pause

Henry Did you know him well?

Ellen What?

Henry Martin. Did you know him well?

Ellen Yeh.

Pause

Well, on and off, like.

Pause

I'm his daughter Ellen.

Henry Oh really? I didn't know. I mean, I didn't know he had a daughter.

Ellen Well, I haven't seen him since I was seven years old.

Henry That's amazing. I only found out today that he'd been in Australia.

Ellen What I said's not strictly true. I actually met him again last week. Just before he died.

Henry That was nice. - not that he died, of course. I meant it was nice that you met him again. After all these years.

Ellen No, it wasn't. I hated the bastard.

Henry Oh.

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Plot Summary

While attending a wake for mild-mannered Martin McCoy, Henry and George discover that the deceased died in mysterious circumstances, and that his life had been threatened by his daughter, his business partner and his wife. In an extended fantasy sequence, Henry imagines how Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson might have investigated the case. Holmes duly and with great panache finds out who 'murdered' Martin!

Duration: approx. 35 minutes

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