

Spotlight Publications

Sherlock Holmes & The Poison Pen Letter

A one-act comedy
by Simon Rayner Davis



SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE POISON PEN LETTER

CHARACTERS

Sherlock Holmes, the world-famous detective

Doctor Watson, his world-famous sidekick

Mrs Hudson, their world-famous landlady

Moriarty, their world-famous arch enemy

Sarah Moaney, a hitherto unknown attractive damsel in distress

Set: the drawing room of 221b Baker Street

Time: the 1890s

The action of the play takes place in the drawing room of the world-famous detective at 221B Baker Street, London

The curtains open to darkness save for a flashlight that is obviously signalling in Morse code. We hear the voice of Sherlock Holmes declaiming each letter out loud as it is signalled

Holmes S ... O ... D. Sod!

Watson Sod it, Holmes. It was meant to be S.O.S. not S.O.D.

Holmes An easy but basic error to make. Dot, dot, dot for an 's' and dash, dot, dot for a 'd' are commonly confused.

Watson Oh dash it all, Holmes.

Holmes Dash it all and you will be completely unintelligible ... *(Aside)* So no change there then.

Mrs Hudson, the landlady, immediately enters also with a torch which she directs wildly around the room as she speaks

Mrs Hudson What are you two gentlemen doing shining torchlights everywhere?

Holmes *(shining his torch directly in the face of Mrs Hudson)* Forgive us, Mrs Hudson. I am merely trying to teach Doctor Watson the subtle nuances of Morse code.

Mrs Hudson *(shining her torch directly in the face of Watson)* Well you can just stop that immediately. This is a very respectable locality of London, this is, and I don't care for any of my tenants to go flashing themselves in clear view of anyone who may happen to pass these lodgings.

Watson *(shining his torch directly in the face of Holmes)* Please accept our sincere apologies, Mrs Hudson. We shall cease our flashings immediately.

Mrs Hudson I should think so!

Holmes *(struggling against the glare of the torchlight in his face)* You may turn on the electric lights, Mrs Hudson.

Mrs Hudson Very good, Mr Holmes.

Mrs Hudson does so and the lights come up on the stage to reveal not only our three characters but a dead body slumped over a chaise longue. There is a large knife sticking out of the body and a letter in the victim's hand

(Screaming in fright) Aaaaaarrgghhhhhh!!! What's that?

Mrs Hudson points to the body with her torch. Holmes and Watson similarly turn and shine their torches onto the body also

Holmes (*moving to the body*) If I'm not very much mistaken, and I'm not very much, I would venture to suggest that here we have a cadaver.

Mrs Hudson Ooh, smashing. I love magic!

Holmes Not abracadabra! I said a cadaver.

Mrs Hudson Oh, right ... (*a pause*) What's one of them then?

Holmes A dead body, Mrs Hudson.

Watson Are you sure, Holmes?

Holmes Perhaps you would care to examine the body, Watson, to prove me right?

Watson Certainly, Holmes.

He proceeds to shine the torch intently all over the dead body until interrupted by Holmes

Holmes Watson ...

Watson (*still shining the torch and examining the body as he speaks*) Yes, Holmes?

Holmes I think we can dispense with the torch, don't you?

Watson Oh ... yes, Holmes.

He turns off the torch and hands it to Holmes

Holmes I wonder if you would be so kind, Mrs Hudson? (*offering the two torches he now holds to Mrs Hudson*)

Mrs Hudson Of course, Mr Holmes. You know that I always carry a torch for you

Holmes Er ... Quite! (*Turning back quickly to Watson to avoid the gaze of Mrs Hudson*) Well, Watson, what do you think?

Watson I think you're right, Holmes. We have a goner here.

Holmes And is that your determination of the cause of death?

Watson (*slightly at a loss at Holmes's question*) I'm not sure I follow you, Holmes.

Holmes Gonorrhoea! I believe that was the expression you used.

Watson I haven't examined the body quite that closely!

Holmes So what have you managed to ascertain so far?

Watson Well, from my brief study of the body and taking into account that he has very smelly breath I believe he was poisoned!

Holmes A reasonable supposition, Watson, but I think you'll find that the unsavoury breath of this poor unfortunate is attributable to a chicken tikka toastie bought from a local hostelry just up the road.

Watson Not that woman with the pair of giant blades over her entrance?

Holmes The same, Watson. Madam Two Swords (Tussauds).

Watson But that's astonishing, Holmes. How could you possibly deduce that?

Holmes It's quite simple, Watson. I too suffered from the same smelly breath when I purchased an identical chicken tikka toastie from the same establishment.

Watson (*fanning his face from Holmes's smelly breath*) You're right, Holmes. That's absolutely fowl! But if he wasn't poisoned what is the cause of death?

Holmes Well, it's just a stab in the dark but I think our victim here was fatally wounded with a sharp pointed weapon.

Watson Astounding! Have you got any evidence for this prognosis, Holmes?

Holmes Just one small clue, Watson. This knife which you see protrudes from the body.

Mrs Hudson Here ...

She hands the torches she still holds to Watson, and then proceeds to pull the knife out of the dead body

... that's my best kitchen knife, that is.

Holmes Are you sure? (*snatching the knife from Mrs Hudson and examining it*)

Mrs Hudson Of course I'm sure. If you care to come down to my scullery I'll show you my complete service

...

Holmes Er ... that won't be necessary. (*Turns away from her to Watson*) Watson!

Watson Yes, Holmes?

Holmes Do me a favour and get this fingerprinted.

Watson Certainly, Holmes!

Watson returns the torches to Mrs Hudson and takes the knife from Holmes but in doing so appears to slash Holmes's wrist. He remains oblivious to this and proceeds to daub the knife with his own fingerprints

Holmes (looking at his wrist) Aarghh! (No reaction so louder this time) Aarghh, blood!

Mrs Hudson (noticing that Holmes is frantically holding his wrist in some pain) Are you hurt, Mr Holmes?

Holmes It is but a life-threatening cut to the radial artery, Mrs Hudson. Nothing trivial, and by my estimation, if the blood flow is not stemmed straightway, death should follow in exactly (taking out his pocket watch with some difficulty) forty nine minutes and eighteen seconds.

Watson Would you like me to take a look at it, Holmes?

Holmes Only if you're not too busy.

Watson Well I had thought to take this knife to the forensic laboratory to see if they could determine whether this could possibly be the murder weapon.

Holmes (sarcastically) Oh, fine! Well you go and do that first then, Watson.

Watson Oh, right you are, Holmes. I'll see you later then.

Holmes No doubt, although I ought to warn you, Watson, that unless you can return within the hour I am liable to be very poor company when you get back on account of the fact I will be dead.

Watson Oh! Perhaps I'd better look at it before I go.

Holmes I would be indebted, Watson.

Watson returns the knife to Mrs Hudson and then proceeds to examine Holmes's wrist

And I warn you, I expect nothing less than your complete candour when you have undertaken your inspection.

Watson Have no fear, Holmes, I'll be brutally frank.

Holmes Thank you, Frank!

Holmes looks away whilst Watson examines his wrist in a rough and harsh manner

(Still looking away) Watson.

Watson (still intently examining the wrist) Yes, Holmes?

Holmes Can you be not quite so brutal, please.

Watson Sorry, Holmes.

He proceeds to examine Holmes's wrist, putting it up to his nose with various oohs and aahs. At length he lets go of his wrist

Mrs Hudson.

Mrs Hudson Yes, Doctor Watson?

Watson I wonder if you'd care to check this out for a bit?

Mrs Hudson Ooh, yes, please! I've been dying to get hold of Mr Holmes for a bit!

Mrs Hudson hands over the torches and the knife to Watson, during which Watson whispers incoherently to Mrs Hudson his diagnosis. She then proceeds to examine Holmes's wrist, putting it up to her nose with various oohs and aahs

Mrs Hudson I think you're absolutely right, Doctor Watson.

Holmes (both surprised and fearful) Watson right? Are you sure?

Mrs Hudson I am, and it ain't going to be easy to sort this bleedin' mess out an' all.

Holmes (his mind racing) Really?

Mrs Hudson Yes! Tomato sauce is a bugger to get out of white starched cuffs.

Holmes (looking back at his wrist) Tomato sauce?

Watson Yes Holmes. You splodged some on your cuffs at breakfast this morning in your haste to scoff every single one of Mrs Hudson's marmite soldiers.

Holmes Purely in consideration of your cholesterol level which we both know is at a dangerously high level. Not to mention your acute diabetes, your chronic asthma, a painful verruca on the big toe of your left foot and what has to be said is some very unsightly cellulite.

Watson Dash it, Holmes, how did you know about my cellulite?

Holmes We've showered together, Watson, remember? Which reminds me, I left out haemorrhoids.

Mrs Hudson sniggers loudly

Watson Holmes, I'd be grateful if you were more discreet in future about my ailments in front of Mrs Hudson and the like.

Holmes Fear not, Watson. Mrs Hudson's sniggering is a certain sign that she suffers from the rare but sometimes very useful sporadic amnesia syndrome and by my calculation she will have forgotten this conversation ever took place and cease her sniggering in three point six seconds.

Mrs Hudson stops sniggering in three point six seconds precisely and adopts a completely blank expression

Watson (*astounded*) How do you do it, Holmes?

Holmes It's a rare gift, Watson.

Watson Rather like the deer stalker I bought for your last birthday, Holmes?

Holmes Alas, no, Watson. That is a common gift.

At that very moment Sarah Moaney bursts through the door. She is a most attractive young lady mid twenties or thirties

Sarah Excuse my intrusion but is this the house of Mr Holmes, the world-famous detective?

Mrs Hudson It is.

Sarah Oh, what sheer luck!

Holmes (*clearly distracted by her beauty*) Actually, it's Sherlock but you're close enough!

Sarah Mister Holmes, I am in distress.

Watson (*he hands the knife and torches to Mrs Hudson and proceeds to lift up Sarah's dress and looks underneath*) She's right you know, Holmes, she is in dis-dress!

Holmes Forgive my associate Doctor Watson. He's not been feeling himself lately.

Mrs Hudson That's obvious. He's just been feeling ...

Holmes (*interrupting and quickly changing the subject*) Would you be so good as to make all us some tea, Mrs Hudson?

Sarah That's very kind of you, Mister Holmes.

Holmes Please, call me Sherly.

Mrs Hudson (*facetiously*) Oh Sherly you can't be serious?

Holmes I am and don't call me Sherly!

Mrs Hudson hands the knife and torches to Holmes and exits in a huff

Holmes I'm sorry about that, miss ... er ?

Sarah Moaney. Sarah Moaney.

Sherlock Holmes & The Poison Pen Letter

The third in Simon Davis's series of spoofs (*The Fictional Five, Licensed To Thrill*), this hilarious farce features the World-famous Detective, his sidekick Dr Watson, and his adversary, the Insane Arch-villain Moriarty.

Plot Summary

Holmes and Watson discover a dead body on their chaise longue. A distressed actress Sarah Moaney bursts in to suggest it is her thumbless uncle, Justice Fingers. But is it just an act, or part of Moriarty's fiendish plot to eliminate the Great Detective? The play proceeds at breakneck speed via outrageous puns and plot twists to a denouement—of sorts that will leave you baffled but hugely entertained.

Running time: 40 minutes

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