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Product Code A0876-SP

Sherlock's Christmas

Adapted from the work of Arthur Conan Doyle

by

Jon Jory

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

16 W, 5 M

without doubling or tripling

9 W, 5 M

*with doubling and tripling**

THREE FEMALE CAROLERS

SHERLOCK HOLMES; *male*

DR. WATSON; *gender neutral*

THREE FEMALE PASSERSBY

FATHER CHRISTMAS; *male*

EBENEZER SCROOGE; *male*

HENRY BAKER; *male*

TWEEDLE; *female*

THREE FEMALE SALESWOMEN

JAMIE RYDER; *female*

CATHERINE; *female*

MAY; *female*

MAGGIE; *female*

YOUNG FEMALE CAROLER

*Example: The three female carolers could also be the three female passersby and the three female street saleswomen.

SETTING

There are three levels of platforms. They rise about eight inches up from the stage floor. The top level serves as Sherlock's office at Baker Street. The middle level is for scenes taking place in other interiors mainly. The stage level serves for outdoor scenes and narration. Furniture should be kept at a necessary minimum. All furniture changes are handled by the cast or costumed scene changers.

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A PLAY IN ONE LONG ACT

AT RISE: *As the lights come up, we see a group of FOUR CAROLERS – THREE WOMEN AND A MAN. The man is SHERLOCK HOLMES They sing the last bit of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen." A passerby drops a penny in the hat; it is WATSON.*

WATSON

Good heavens... Holmes?

HOLMES waves to him and continues to sing.

WATSON, *Continued*

Holmes, I really must disturb you.

HOLMES signals he can't stop in the middle. WATSON shifts uncomfortably until it's over.

HOLMES

(To one of the female carolers)

Awfully sorry. I must speak to the gentleman.

CAROLER

We'll go straight on.

HOLMES

I'll catch up.

CAROLER

(As they leave)

You don't want to miss *Silent Night!*

HOLMES

Good gracious, no.

THE CAROLERS exit.

HOLMES, *Continued*

What is it Watson? You must see I'm engaged.

WATSON

As a caroler?

HOLMES

Quite so, I once thought of a career in opera.

WATSON

Remarkable.

HOLMES

In what way?

WATSON

Well see here, Holmes, I've known you for nine years and you never even know it's Christmas.

HOLMES

I quite agree. What you call the Christmas season sets every criminal in London to work, and every pocket-pick in a frenzy. You will admit it's our busiest season.

WATSON

But here you are on Raleigh Street in the midst of *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*.

HOLMES

Well, Lestrade, our rather dimwitted detective acquaintance from Scotland Yard, was unable to do his annual caroling and asked me to fill in. One doesn't wish to disappoint.

WATSON

Well, we've had a visitor.

HOLMES

A case you mean?

WATSON

Of a sort.

HOLMES

And the visitor's name?

WATSON

Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge.

HOLMES

The philanthropist?

WATSON

Quite so. Each Christmas he provides one hundred plump geese to the poor.

HOLMES

A charming and generous soul. What brought him to Baker Street?

WATSON

Well it might be considered a triviality, a whimsical little incident when you have four million human beings all jostling each other within the space of a few square miles.

HOLMES

As we know, Watson, of our last six cases, three have been entirely free of crime.

WATSON

Quite so. Well, Mr. Scrooge, or “friendly Ebenezer” as he’s often called, stopped by Baker Street while you were out singing. (*Takes off the hat he’s been wearing*) He left this hat which he had found. He, Scrooge, was returning from a jollification at his nephew Fred’s when he saw, in the gaslight, a tallish man, walking with a slight swagger and carrying a white goose slung over his shoulder.

HOLMES

Do hurry Watson, I don’t want to miss *Silent Night* where I am featured in a solo.

WATSON

Understood. As he reached Goodge Street, a row broke out between this stranger and a little knot of toughs. One knocked off the man’s hat, on which he raised his stick to defend himself and swinging it over his head, smashed the shop window behind him.

HOLMES

I do have some affection for a good old-fashioned brawl. I once considered becoming a pugilist, you know.

WATSON

Scrooge had rushed forward to protect the stranger from his assailants...

HOLMES

Good man, that Scrooge. The very spirit of Christmas.

WATSON

But the man, shocked at having broken the window, and seeing an officer, dropped the goose, took to his heels and vanished amid the labyrinth of small streets which lie at the back of Tottenham Court Road. Scrooge was thus left in possession of the field of battle, and also of the spoils of victory in the shape of this battered hat and a most unimpeachable Christmas goose.

HOLMES

Would you care to hear my solo?

WATSON

We must stick to the point, Holmes.

HOLMES

Just a verse.

HOLMES sings a verse of Silent Night beautifully. THREE YOUNG PASSERSBY rush on.

WOMAN 1

That was so extraordinarily, unbelievably, remarkably beautiful.

WOMAN 2

I almost fainted with delight.

WOMAN 3

Would you sign my hand?

HOLMES

Delighted.

HOLMES takes out a pen.

WOMAN 3

What is that?

HOLMES

I've just invented it. I call it the ball point recording pen. *(Signs her hand)*

WOMAN 3

Thank you, handsome singing man.

WOMAN 2

Are you married?

HOLMES

I am, blessedly, a confirmed bachelor.

WOMAN 2

Take my card. Meet me Wednesday in St. James Park at one o'clock. We'll canoodle. *(As the GIRLS run off)* I'll be wearing a red hat.

HOLMES

(Writing on his hand with his pen)

A red hat.

WATSON

(Trying to get HOLMES back on track)

Holmes!

HOLMES

Don't be excitable, Watson.

WATSON

So. Scrooge was left with this battered hat and a Christmas goose.

HOLMES

Which surely he restored to their owner.

WATSON

My dear fellow, there's the problem. There was a small card tied to the bird's leg with "For Mr. Henry Baker" printed on it, but as there are hundreds of Henry Bakers in this city of ours, it is not easy to restore lost property to any of them.

HOLMES

This is a bit boring, Watson, what did Ebenezer Scrooge do?

WATSON

He brought both hat and goose to you at Baker Street seeking your assistance.

HOLMES

Did he not advertise?

WATSON

No.

HOLMES

Well, let us see what we can deduce from the hat.

WATSON

(Looking at it)

I can see nothing.

FATHER CHRISTMAS crosses the stage.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Ho, ho, ho, Merry Christmas to all. Ho, ho, ho. Merry Christmas!

HOLMES

Who on earth was that?

WATSON

Father Christmas, I believe.

HOLMES

Odd. I always thought he was a figment of the popular imagination.

WATSON

Quite real. He brought me a lump of coal when I was six.

HOLMES

Actually, Watson, I believe that to be the king of criminality, Moriarty, dressed as Father Christmas. Did you not notice his shoes?

WATSON

What of his shoes?

HOLMES

Nothing in particular, I'd rather like a pair. Now then, back to the hat.

WATSON

Yes, the hat.

HOLMES

The hat! (*Looks it over*) The man was highly intellectual, fairly well-to-do within the last three years, although he has now fallen on evil days. Definitely a decline of his fortune, taken to drink and his wife has ceased to love him.

WATSON

My dear, Holmes!

HOLMES

He has, however, some degree of self-respect, leads a sedentary life, is middle aged and has had his hair cut within the last three days.

WATSON

Astounding. Why intellectual?

HOLMES

Hat size. It's a question of cubic capacity.

WATSON

The decline of his fortunes?

HOLMES

Three years old. These flat brims curled at the edge came in then. Very good quality. If he bought a hat three years ago and hasn't replaced it, his fortunes have obviously declined. Would you like to hear me sing the *Habanera* from the opera *Carmen*?

WATSON

Stick to the point, Holmes! How do you know his wife has ceased to love him?

HOLMES

The hat hasn't been brushed in weeks. Quite filthy. A wife who would let her husband go out in such a state is obviously disenchanted. Are you satisfied?

WATSON

Well, it is very ingenious –

They have now entered the Baker Street office on the third tier of our set.

HOLMES

Home again. (*Rubbing his hands together in pleasure*) What are you getting me for Christmas?

WATSON

Concentrate, man.

HOLMES

Oh, all right.

WATSON

As you said just now, there has been no crime committed, and no harm done but the loss of a goose. It does sound rather trivial.

A man, SCROOGE, bursts in.

SCROOGE

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

HOLMES

Do I know you?

SCROOGE

Ebenezer Scrooge, Mr. Holmes. Formerly of Scrooge and Marley.

HOLMES

Oh yes, Marley. I put that fine gentleman in chains for bank fraud.

SCROOGE

He loved those chains, did poor Marley.

HOLMES

Loved to rattle them.

SCROOGE

Died strangled in those chains. Got wrapped right around his windpipe.

HOLMES

Do you miss him, Mr. Scrooge?

SCROOGE

Oh, his ghost drops by every once in a while for a chat.

HOLMES

There is no such creature as a ghost, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE

Little you know; I saw three in one night!

HOLMES

Nonsense.

SCROOGE

But I speak of the goose, sir.

HOLMES

Has it returned to life, and flapped through the kitchen window?

SCROOGE

See here, sir! See what my wife has found in its crop.

HOLMES

I didn't know you had married?

SCROOGE

I married Bob Cratchit's ex-wife. Cooks an excellent pudding. Now! See here! (*Holds out a large blue jewel*)

HOLMES

By Jove, Scrooge! This is a treasure trove. I suppose you know what you've got?

SCROOGE

A diamond, sir. Cuts through glass as though it were putty.

HOLMES

Not just a diamond. The diamond.

WATSON

Not the Countess of Morcar's blue carbuncle?

HOLMES

Ah, the Countess! She loved to hear me sing *Tosca*.

WATSON

Stolen from the Countess while she stayed at the Hotel Cosmopolitan.

HOLMES

A reward of a thousand pounds offered.

SCROOGE

Not a twentieth part of the market price. It could buy fifty thousand Christmas dinners for the poor of London.

HOLMES

The Countess would part with half her fortune if she could but recover the gem.

WATSON

It was stolen from the lady's jewel case December twenty-second. Joseph "Light Fingers" Cratchit, a pickpocket and plumber, is the accused.

SCROOGE

Yes, yes, I know his brother Bob. They're all crooks those Cratchits.

WATSON

The paper reports that Cratchit was called to the Countess's suite for a faucet drip. Cratchit appeared doing his plumbing routine and when he left the jewel case left with him. He was arrested the same evening, but the jewel could not be found.

HOLMES

Both Cratchits fence stolen goods.

SCROOGE

Nice thought that Bob's son Tiny Tim has gone on to fame and fortune for singing and playing ukulele.

WATSON

This Cratchit person fainted at the conclusion of the trial and was carried out of court.

HOLMES

We must discover the sequence of events leading from a rifled jewel case at one end and the crop of a goose in Tottenham Court Road at the other. We must find this Mr. Henry Baker, of the bad hat.

SCROOGE

Let's advertise. Marley and I loved to advertise!

WATSON

What shall we say?

HOLMES

Give me that pencil and a scrap of paper. (*Saying as he writes*) Found at the corner of Goodge Street, a goose and a black felt hat. Mr. Baker may redeem same by applying at 221B, Baker Street.

WATSON

Very clear and concise.

SCROOGE

I'll take the advertisement down to the papers. I used to know the editor before he went into the news trade. Fezziwig is the name. I was once in love with his daughter.

WATSON

What became of her?

SCROOGE

She ran off with Charles Dickens.

HOLMES

Everybody does.

SCROOGE

What about the diamond?

HOLMES

I'll keep the diamond. Oh, I say, Scrooge, just buy a goose on the way back and leave it here, for we must have one to give to this gentleman.

SCROOGE

I'm off. Merry Christmas!

HOLMES & WATSON, *Together*

Merry Christmas!

SCROOGE

And God bless us, every one! (*Exits*)

WATSON

(Looking after him)

Lovely old gentleman.

HOLMES

A police record as long as your arm. Done well though since he's been paroled. That Marley is another case altogether. Known as the chain strangler.

WATSON

Do you think this James Cratchit innocent?

HOLMES

I cannot tell.

WATSON

And what of Mr. Henry Baker?

HOLMES

That we shall see when he arrives.

***BLACKOUT/ LIGHTS
IMMEDIATELY BACK UP.***

HENRY BAKER stands in Baker Street.

HOLMES

Mr. Henry Baker, I presume? Is that your hat, Mr. Baker?

HENRY BAKER

It is undoubtedly my hat.

HOLMES

We have waited to hear from you for several days.

HENRY BAKER

The travails of Christmas shopping, sir. The crowds have been overwhelming.

HOLMES

I am at a loss to know why you would not advertise for the hat and bird?

HENRY BAKER

Shillings have not been so plentiful with me as they once were and presents must be bought. I assumed the gang of toughs who assaulted me had carried off both my hat and the bird. I did not wish to spend more money in a hopeless attempt at recovering them.

WATSON

The cost of anything in the holiday season is outrageous. Wool socks are up to a penny.

HOLMES

By the way, about the bird, we were compelled to eat it.

HENRY BAKER

Eat it!

HOLMES

Waste not, want not, sir. There is a goose by the door downstairs, the same weight and perfectly fresh, that will answer your purpose perfectly well.

HENRY BAKER

Ah! Delighted. Do you know I heard recently that Americans pursue the wild turkey for their holiday repast?

WATSON

A nasty bird. I've heard when mixed with cranberries it's poisonous.

HENRY BAKER

I will confine my attentions to the excellent goose you have provided.

HOLMES

Well sir, you will carry away your hat and your bird. By the way, would it bore you to tell me where you got the other one from? I have seldom seen a better goose.

HENRY BAKER

Certainly, there are a few of us who patronize the Christmas Past Inn. This year our host, Mrs. Tweedle Dee, instituted a goose club and by giving a few pence a week, we receive a bird at Christmas. I must be off. I am in search of mistletoe. Goodbye.

WATSON

Goodbye.

HOLMES

Goodbye. (*HENRY BAKER goes.*) Why would anyone seek mistletoe, the results are so unsanitary. So much for Mr. Henry Baker. It is quite certain he knows nothing whatever about the matter.

WATSON

Pity.

HOLMES

I suggest we follow up the clue while it is still hot and savory.

WATSON

I was sure we would.

LIGHTS CHANGE. *HOLMES exits.
WATSON moves down to stage level to
speak to us in A SINGLE LIGHT. While
he does, a plank table and two chairs are
set up on level two.*

WATSON, *Continued*

It was a bitter night. Holmes insisted on stopping twice to sing *Silent Night* with surprised carolers, but in an hour we arrived at the Christmas Past Inn.

LIGHTS CHANGE. *A serving woman,
TWEEDLE DEE, enters as HOLMES and
WATSON do.*

TWEEDLE DEE

Good evening, most honored gentlemen. I am the proprietress, Mrs. Tweedle Dee, and I would prefer there to be no jokes about my name. None. Not one. Are we quite clear about this?

WATSON

Absolutely.

HOLMES

Completely.

TWEEDLE DEE

See you abide by it. Two glasses of beer one supposes?

HOLMES

Reputation says your beer should be excellent if it is as good as your geese.

TWEEDLE DEE

My geese? I am no goose-girl, sir. I am the proprietor of the establishment in which you take your ease.

HOLMES

Quite so. I can see you would not stoop to geese. There is nothing of the goose about you but... I was speaking only half an hour ago to Mr. Henry Baker, who was a member of your goose club.

TWEEDLE DEE

Ah, I see. I have arrived at a deeper understanding, sir. But you see, sir, them's not our geese.

WATSON

Indeed! Whose then?

TWEEDLE DEE

Well, I got the two dozen from a salesman in Covent Garden.

HOLMES

I know the salesmen, which was it?

TWEEDLE DEE

Breckinridge – easy to spot. He dresses as Father Christmas during the season. The young drag the old to purchase his geese.

HOLMES

I don't know him. Father Christmas? I suppose he dresses as an egg at Easter.

WATSON

Now, Holmes.

HOLMES

Many thanks, Mrs. Tweedle.

TWEEDLE DEE

I asked you to restrain the use of the name, sir. I cannot run a serious establishment with the local wits calling my husband Tweedle Dum and myself Tweedle Dee.

HOLMES bursts out laughing.

WATSON

Holmes!

HOLMES

Terribly sorry. It just burst out you see. Generous thanks for your assistance.

WATSON

And a Merry Christmas.

HOLMES

I don't suppose you'd care to hear my rendition of *Silent Night*?

TWEEDLE DEE

Good heavens, no, sir. I've heard nothing else for a month. (*Exits*)

HOLMES

Onward, Watson. We shall visit Sir Father Christmas of the geese. My *Silent Night* really is good you know?

WATSON

Oh, wonderful. You must sing it to me once we've solved the case.

HOLMES

An iron-clad promise, Watson. Remember that though we have so homely a thing as a goose at one end of the chain, we have at the other a man who will certainly get seven years penal servitude unless we can establish his innocence.

WATSON

But is it not as likely that we may confirm his guilt?

HOLMES

Quite true, but we have a line of investigation missed by the police. Let us follow it out to the bitter end. Faces to the south then, and quick march.

LIGHT CHANGE. *WATSON moves downstage to speak to us.*

WATSON

We passed across Holburn, then down Endell Street and so through a zig-zag of slum to Covent Garden market.

WOMAN 1

Christmas trees, mistletoe, wreaths and table flowers!

WOMAN 2

Bible to celebrate the holiday! Manger scenes! Take a look!

WOMAN 3

Knives sharpened to carve your goose or your husband, take your pick!

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Father Christmas, geese on order! Ho, ho, ho. Father Christmas! A little gift for your child in every goose. Ho, ho, ho.

WATSON and HOLMES move over to him. THE WOMEN exit crying their wares.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Welcome merry gentlemen! Father Christmas to serve your every need.

This Father Christmas is dressed as Santa Claus.

HOLMES

If you represent Father Christmas, what on earth are you wearing?

FATHER CHRISTMAS

It is an American innovation.

HOLMES

Ridiculous.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Who are you calling ridiculous?

HOLMES

You, you bloated tomato.

WATSON

(Getting between them)

Gentlemen, gentlemen! A little peace and good will in honor of the season.

They back away from each other.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

(Forcing his good cheer)

Ho, ho, ho! All your holiday necessities! Wreaths, ornaments, geese and sheet music.

HOLMES

Christmas sheet music?

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Well, I'm not selling, *Dolly Down the Hallway*.

HOLMES

Have you *Good King Wenceslas*?

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Sold out.

HOLMES

O come, O come, Emmanuel?

FATHER CHRISTMAS

All gone.

HOLMES

In Dulce Jubilo?

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Last copy sold five minutes ago.

HOLMES

Silent Night?

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Never heard of it.

HOLMES

What!!

WATSON

Holmes...

HOLMES

You have never heard of *Silent Night*??

WATSON

The goose, Holmes.

HOLMES

There's not a British citizen alive who doesn't know *Silent Night*!!

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Do you impugn my citizenship?!

HOLMES

I'll bloody sing it to you!!

WATSON

Goose, Holmes. Goose, goose, goose!!

HOLMES

(Muttering)
Doesn't know *Silent Night*.

WATSON

Not the point, Holmes.

HOLMES

I've a three-year-old nephew can sing it backwards.

WATSON

We're rather interested in your geese.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Sold out. Let you have nineteen tomorrow morning.

HOLMES

(Still muttering)
Claims to be Father Christmas and doesn't know *Silent Night*.

WATSON

(Ignoring him)
You see, we were recommended to you.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Who by?

WATSON

The landlord at Tweedles's.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Salty old dame. Sent her a couple of dozen.

HOLMES

(Sharply)
Where did you get them from?

FATHER CHRISTMAS

(Hostile)
Who wants to know?

HOLMES

Sherlock Holmes, the greatest detective in England.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard is the greatest detective in England.

HOLMES

Inspector Lestrade couldn't find a cow in a closet.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

And you probably don't even know *Silent Night!*

Fisticuffs begin.

WATSON

Stand down this instant!!

Fight stops.

WATSON, *Continued*

Now tell the man what you need to know, Holmes.

HOLMES

I'll bet a fiver that the bird of yours I ate was country bred.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Well, sir, you've lost your fiver, for it's town bred.

HOLMES

It is nothing of the kind.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

I say it is!

HOLMES

It isn't!

WATSON

There are children watching, Father Christmas sir.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Where?

WATSON

(Pointing out toward the AUDIENCE)

There, sir.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Ho, ho, ho, Merry Christmas! *(Turns back; picks up an account book)* Now then, Mr. Cocksure, you see this little book?

HOLMES

Well?

FATHER CHRISTMAS

That's the list of the folks from whom I buy. D'you see? Well, then, here on this page are the country folk, and the numbers after their names are where their accounts are in the big ledger. You see this other page in red ink? That's my list of town suppliers. Read out that third name, Mr. Great Detective?

HOLMES

Mrs. Oakshott, 117 Brixton Road – 249. Farm eggs, geese. Twenty-four birds sold to Mrs. Tweedle.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Country geese, sir. All recorded. Let us see the color of your money. *(HOLMES hands over the money.)* I'd move along now, Mr. Tone Deaf.

HOLMES

I've half a mind to give you a good whipping.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

In your dreams, Sherlock Holmes.

WATSON

(Pulling HOLMES away)

Come along, Holmes, all's done here.

FATHER CHRISTMAS exits with his cart.

HOLMES

(Cheerful)

Well, Watson, we've done a bit of good there. I daresay, if I'd put a hundred pound note in front of him, that man would not have given me such complete information as was drawn from him by dangling a wager.

WATSON

Amazing! I was quite convinced you'd run mad.

HOLMES

A bit of the old acting, eh Watson? Ah, my days upon the stage. My Lear made strong men weep. Have you heard my mad scene, Watson? "Blow winds and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow!"

WATSON

Sherlock Holmes, that is quite enough!! This is not a play!

HOLMES

Quite right. Mustn't indulge. I was rather good though.

WATSON

Yes, I'm sure you are.

HOLMES

As to our case, I am quite sure we are near the end of our quest.

*FATHER CHRISTMAS appears again
dragging A YOUNG WOMAN dressed in
work clothes by her collar.*

FATHER CHRISTMAS

You come pestering me again, I'll set the dog on you. You bring Mrs. Oakshott here and I'll answer her, but what have you to do with it? Did I buy the geese off you?

WOMAN

No, but one of them was mine all the same.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Well then, ask Mrs. Oakshott for it.

WOMAN

She told me to ask you.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Well, you can ask the King of Proosia, for all I care. Off with you, you little city rat! (*Exits*)

WOMAN

(Calling after him)

Fine sort of Father Christmas you are.

FATHER CHRISTMAS, *Offstage*

Ho, ho, ho – Merry Christmas!

*THE WOMAN turns to go and runs
straight into SHERLOCK HOLMES.*

WOMAN

Who are you then? What do you want?

HOLMES

Pray excuse me, but I could not help overhearing your exchange with Father Christmas. I think I could be of assistance to you.

WOMAN

How could you know anything of the matter?

HOLMES

My name is Sherlock Holmes, it is my business to know what other people don't know.

WOMAN

But you can know nothing of this?

HOLMES

Excuse me, I know everything of it. You are endeavoring to trace some geese which were sold by Mrs. Oakshott of Brixton Road, to a salesman who apparently thinks he's Father Christmas, by him in turn to Tweedle, and then on to an Ebenezer Scrooge.

WOMAN

Oh, sir, you are the very man whom I have longed to meet.

HOLMES

Pray tell me, before we go further, who is it that I have the pleasure of assisting?

WOMAN

My name is Noel.

HOLMES

I'm afraid not. It's always awkward doing business with an alias.

WOMAN

Well then, Jamie Ryder.

HOLMES

Head attendant at the Hotel Olympia. Now then, you want to know what became of the geese?

JAMIE

Yes, sir.

TWO CAROLERS we saw earlier walk through singing Silent Night. HOLMES irresistibly starts following them.

WATSON

Back Holmes! Back!

HOLMES

Terribly sorry, Watson. I just can't trust myself. (To JAMIE) So, the geese. It's one in particular I imagine you are interested in – white with a black bar across the tail.

JAMIE

Oh sir, can you tell me where it went to?

HOLMES

I ate it.

JAMIE

You ate it, sir?

HOLMES

A most remarkable bird. I don't wonder you should take an interest in it. It seems to have laid an egg while I broiled it – the bonniest brightest little blue egg that ever was seen.

JAMIE

It can't have laid an egg in the oven, sir. Ain't natural.

HOLMES

Actually, I have it here in my pocket. *(Takes out the jewel)* Quite a sparkler, is it not?

JAMIE

Oh dear.

HOLMES

Oh dear, exactly. Games up, Miss Jamie Ryder.

JAMIE

Oh dear, oh dear.

HOLMES

I'm having quite a dazzler of a Christmas and you're my best present yet! I have almost every link in my hands, so there is little you need to tell me. Still, that little may make my case complete.

JAMIE & HOLMES, *Together*

(HOLMES is enjoying himself)

Oh dear, oh dear.

HOLMES

You had heard, Jamie Ryder, of this blue stone of the Countess of Morcar's?

JAMIE

It was Catherine Cusack who told me of it.

HOLMES

I see – her ladyship's waiting maid.

THE LIGHTS CHANGE. *HOLMES and WATSON split away to the sides and a stylish young lady, CATHERINE, enters in a flashback.*

CATHERINE

I've noticed you hanging about girl. Who are you for a start?

JAMIE

Whom might be asking?

CATHERINE

She that is asking is Catherine Cusack, lady's maid to the Countess of Morcar.

JAMIE

And why would you be speaking to the likes of me?

CATHERINE

Quite right – why would I?

JAMIE

I've not the ghost of an idea.

CATHERINE

Are you a good girl, little one?

JAMIE

Good as I need to be.

CATHERINE

Would you care to make two hundred pounds?

JAMIE

Crikey!

CATHERINE

I thought you might. (*Looks around to make sure they are alone*) Have you heard of Morcar's blue diamond?

JAMIE

Can't say I have.

CATHERINE

It was found on the banks of the Amoy River in southern China. Blue as the sky, Jamie Ryder. It would buy a good part of London, I calculate. Oh. It's stirred up a good many. There have been two murders, a suicide and several robberies to possess this little piece of crystallized charcoal. Now on a certain date it might be left on my lady's dressing table and someone, I'm not saying who, might drop in and... well, it might disappear or something of the kind. Wherever it went it would come back to me six weeks later with no one the wiser and you would find yourself in possession of two hundred pounds. If, by any chance, it didn't return to me on the appropriate date, well, I would see that Jamie Ryder's name was passed on to Scotland Yard and that same Miss Ryder would die on the gallows with me in attendance. Do you follow me?

*The LIGHTS CHANGE AGAIN.
CATHERINE exits and JAMIE is back
with HOLMES and WATSON.*

HOLMES

Now I'm thinking the temptation of sudden wealth so easily acquired was too much for you. You're a pretty little villain, you are! You knew that this man Cratchit, the plumber, had been on the dark side of the law in the past, and what did you do then? You made a small plumbing job in my lady's room and managed that Cratchit was the man called. Then, when he had left you took the jewel, scattered bits about to look like a burglary, raised the alarm and had poor Cratchit arrested.

JAMIE kneels in front of HOLMES.

JAMIE

For god's sake have mercy! It would break me mother's heart. It was Catherine Cusack set me up to it. I never went wrong before and I never will again. Don't throw me in the courts. It's Christmas time, sir. Have a bit of mercy for the season's sake!

HOLMES

'Poor Jamie. It's very well to cringe and crawl now, but you thought little enough of poor Cratchit, the plumber who was sentenced to seven years for a crime of which he knew nothing.

JAMIE

I'll abscond, Mr. Holmes. I will leave the country, sir. Then the charges against me will break down.

HOLMES

Hmmm! We will talk about that. Tell me, how came the goose into the open market? Tell the truth, Jamie Ryder, and shame the devil.

JAMIE

(Rising)

I'm caught fair and square, sir. I will tell it just as it happened. When Cratchit had been arrested and Catherine Cusack fled to France, it seemed to me that I best get away with the stone at once. I coulda been searched in the street sir! I made for my sister's house. She had married a man named Oakshott and fattened fowls for the market. Oh sir, every man I met seemed to be a policeman or a detective. Then a thought occurred to me.

WATSON

What thought was that?

JAMIE

I had a friend once called May Maudsley who went to the bad.

LIGHTS CHANGE and **MAY**
MAUDSLEY, a tough little street urchin
appears.

MAY

How's you doin', me girl?

JAMIE

Got not a penny in my pocket and people to pay.

MAY

The money's on the dark side, girlie. You got quick hands and a bit of a brain. Steal a little of this and a little of that and I'll tell ya the ways of thieves and how they gets rid of what they steal. I could turn a lump a coal into a fiver, believe you me. Don't be a chump, darlin'. Come on over to the shadows where the money is.

MAY exits. LIGHTS CHANGE and
JAMIE is talking to HOLMES again.

JAMIE

Came to me I should look up May Maudsley, have her show me how to turn the blue diamond into money. But did I dare stay on the streets. I was leanin' on the wall in my sister's backyard looking at the geese waddling around my feet. Gave me an idea, see? Grabbed me this goose, fine big one, white with a barred tail. Pried its bill open, thrust the diamond down its throat with that bird squawking like a siren. Out comes my sister.

Her sister, MAGGIE, enters wearing a
fairy outfit with wings. LIGHTS
CHANGE.

MAGGIE

Whatever you doin' to that bird, Jamie?

JAMIE

Crikey! Who's you supposed to be?

MAGGIE

I'm the Christmas Fairy, I am. You been good I gives you a wish or two.

JAMIE

You're a right big Christmas Fairy, Mags.

MAGGIE

We come in all sizes. I'm goin' down with Billy Sykes to that Christmas spectacular. What can I do you for?

JAMIE

You said I could have a goose for Christmas, so I was feeling which was the fattest.

MAGGIE

Oh, we've set yours aside, Jamie. Big white one over yonder. I got twenty-six this year. One for you, one for us, two dozen for the market.

JAMIE

All the same to you, I'd rather have the one I was handling just now.

MAGGIE

Just as you like. Which is the one, eh?

JAMIE

One with the barred tail in the middle of the flock.

MAGGIE

Kill it an' take it, Girl. I got to go and win the costume prize. Five pounds to the winner.

*MAGGIE exits. LIGHTS CHANGE.
JAMIE moves back to HOLMES and
WATSON.*

JAMIE

Did as I was told. Carried that bird all the way to Kilburn, told me pal, May, what I had done. She laughed until she choked and we got a knife and opened the goose. Nothing there. Wrong goose! Gave me the next thing to a heart attack it did. Rushed back to my sister's. Not a bird to be seen there!

LIGHTS CHANGE. MAGGIE rushes in.

MAGGIE

What's all the shoutin', eh?

JAMIE

Where are they all, Mags?

MAGGIE

Dealer came down not five minutes after you left, took 'em away.

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes