

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN WONDERLAND

By Geff Moyer

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CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

- AXEMAN (E) The Queen's executioner
- EIGHT "PLAYING CARD" GUARDS (E)..... Each carries a spear
- QUEEN OF HEARTS (F) That testy monarch who loves roses and herself
- WHITE RABBIT (E)..... A nervous wreck
- SHERLOCK HOLMES (M)..... The greatest detective of all time
- DR. WATSON (M)..... The greatest assistant of all time
- THE MAD HATTER (E)..... Very close to being in a state of manic depression
- CATERPILLAR (E)..... A large green insect who'll probably never become a butterfly
- CHESHIRE CAT (E)..... A mime role

SETTING: Bare stage with various set pieces.

TIME: Just before noon.

PLACE: Wonderland

PROPERTIES

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Eight Spears | Army Helmet |
| One Large Axe on a Pole | Fancy Easter Bonnet |
| Two Strands of Rope for Binding | Large Cowboy Hat |
| Two Black Bags | Native American Head Dress |
| Several Tea Cups and Tea Pots | Viking Helmet |
| Fake Cobwebs | Various Food Containers |
| | Hero Sandwich |

PRODUCTION SUGGESTIONS

A major key to the success of this show is its pacing. It must run at a constant, fluid clip, especially the banter between Holmes and Watson. The “black out” times between each “scene” should be no more than fifteen seconds, and filled with the appropriate music, some of which has been specifically suggested (or hinted at). A good way to accomplish this fluidity, and if you have the “wing” space to do it, is to place the Hatter’s table and chairs, and the Caterpillar and its food debris, on two separate platforms equipped with casters. Then they may be rolled in and out with speed. The boulder for the Cheshire Cat is easy enough to simply have a crew member “place.” All costumes in this show should reflect the classic Lewis Carroll ALICE IN WONDERLAND characters, from the guards and axeman wearing the “playing card” motifs, the gaudy hearts and roses on the Queen, to the visuals elements expected for the White Rabbit, Mad Hatter, Caterpillar, and Cheshire Cat. Holmes and Watson should be clad in 19th century apparel. Holmes’ double billed hat is a must. Watson would don a derby.

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Royal Procession music begins and leads into a kettle drum marching beat as six "Playing Card" GUARDS enter, carrying spears. I would like to suggest the Imperial March from Star Wars, but cannot because of copyright considerations. So just ignore my mentioning it. THEY form two parallel lines in a V shape for the QUEEN to pass through. Another "Playing Card" AXEMAN enters carrying a large axe on a pole and progresses down the lines and stops. HE pounds his pole on the ground twice.

AXEMAN: HER ILLUSTRIOUS AND MOST MAGNIFICENT AND ALWAYS BENEVOLENT ROYAL MAJESTY

(The QUEEN OF HEARTS enters, obviously impatient and irritated, but when isn't she? A very nervous WHITE RABBIT follows her. The QUEEN stops abruptly DC and the RABBIT runs into her rear end.)

QUEEN: WATCH IT, you hare brained, bumbling imbecile!

WHITE RABBIT: Sorry, sorry, your illustrious and most magnificent and always benevolent Royal Majesty!

QUEEN: *(To AXEMAN)* Well, where are they? Where are my famous "guests?"

AXEMAN: *(HE pounds his pole twice then calls to offstage)* BRING IN THE GUESTS!

(Two more GUARDS enter, using their spear points to push TWO PEOPLE onto stage. THEY are bound and have black bags over their heads.)

Her Illustrious and most magnificence and always benevolent Royal Majesty, may I present,

(A GUARD removes the bags from the heads of the "guests")

Sherlock Holmes and his servant, Watson.

WATSON: "Servant!?"

QUEEN: Gentlemen, I demand your services!

WATSON: *(Adjusting to the light)* "Demand!?"

QUEEN: Wonderland has a thief, whom you *will* apprehend!

WATSON: *What* has a thief?

SHERLOCK: The lady said "Wonderland," Watson. What has been stolen, Madam?

AXEMAN: You will address the Queen as Her illustrious and most magnificence and always benevolent Royal Majesty.

QUEEN: You are not surprised at your whereabouts, Mr. Holmes?

SHERLOCK: When one is too surprised, it has a tendency to cloud a sometimes necessary immediate reaction. Besides, I detected the excessive scent of roses quite some time ago, Madam...

(HE receives a poke from the AXEMAN.)

...uh, Your illustrious and most magnificence and always benevolent Royal Majesty.

WATSON: Quite a mouthful of accolades, hey, Holmes?

AXEMAN: A mouth which will vanish with your head if you do not use all of them, servant!

WATSON: *(To AXEMAN)* I am a Doctor, not a servant. Now why don't you shuffle over there with the rest of the deck?

AXEMAN: *(HE lightly places the broad side of his axe against WATSON's cheek and gets right into his face)* My axe is sharper than your tongue, servant!

WATSON: With that breath you must play a lot of Solitaire.

(The AXEMAN stomps the end of his pole onto WATSON's foot.)

QUEEN: ENOUGH!

AXEMAN: Yes, your illustrious and most magnificence and always benevolent Royal Majesty.

SHERLOCK: For future reference, Watson: we are bound, they are armed.

WATSON: *(Fighting the pain)* Duly noted!

SHERLOCK: Again, may I ask what was stolen, your illustrious and most magnificence and always benevolent Royal Majesty?

QUEEN: I really do not care *what* was stolen... from *me*. You steal from Wonderland, you have stolen from *me*! And no one steals from this Queen!

WATSON: How presumptuous!! You kidnap, bind and blindfold us, and then expect us to help you find a thief and you won't even tell us...?

(The AXEMAN thrusts his blade dangerously close to WATSON's face. WATSON reluctantly stops talking.)

QUEEN: Obviously, Mr. Holmes, your servant needs to be reminded of his place.

WATSON: "My place!!!?"

AXEMAN: *(Toying with his axe)* Perhaps the removal of a few fingers would suffice, your illustrious and most magnificence and always benevolent Royal Majesty.

QUEEN: *(Lightly touching the AXEMAN's cheek, who should relish the touch)* Lovely idea, my darling Axeman, but we cannot have them crippled before they find our missing items.

SHERLOCK: It would be of great benefit, your illustrious and most magnificence and always benevolent Royal Majesty, if we knew for what you are “demanding” we find.

QUEEN: (*Yanking the WHITE RABBIT towards HOLMES by its ears*) This loathsome creature will answer your questions! In two hours it will be time for my milk bath and nap. This problem will be satisfactorily resolved by then, because NOTHING disturbs my milk bath and nap. If it should NOT be resolved, (*Addressing her guards*) the consequences, my lovelies!?

ALL GUARDS: OFF WITH THEIR HEADS!

QUEEN: Clear, Mr. Holmes?

SHERLOCK: Crystal!

AXEMAN: Crystal, *what?*

SHERLOCK: Quite clear, your illustrious and most magnificence and always benevolent Royal Majesty.

QUEEN: Release them!

(*The kettle drum begins again as the AXEMAN unties only HOLMES, while the other GUARDS and the QUEEN exit.*)

AXEMAN: (*Grinning, to WATSON*) I shall see you in two hours. (*HE licks the blade of his axe, laughs and exits*)

(*HOLMES unties WATSON and helps him steady himself.*)

WATSON: Charming fellow, and what a pleasant woman.

SHERLOCK: One who seems to have us at the pleasure of her charming fellow's axe!

WATSON: (*Rubbing his wrists and his foot*) Rather a harsh penalty for failing to solve a case.

SHERLOCK: Then we'd best not fail, hey, old boy?

WATSON: Or heads will roll! (*HE chuckles*)

SHERLOCK: Haven't your puns caused you enough pain today, Watson? Can you walk?

WATSON: (*Testing his foot*) I believe so. Nothing broken.

RABBIT: Will this take long? I must be at... well, I'm not sure where, (*HE looks behind him*) but I'm certain it's somewhere. Do you know where I'm supposed to be?

WATSON: We don't even know what you are!

SHERLOCK: Watson, may I introduce the White Rabbit.

WATSON: The what!?

RABBIT: Peter.

WATSON: Peter!?

PETER: My name is Peter. The Queen simply addresses me as that loathsome creature, or hare ball, or hare brain, or the poop beneath her foot, (*glancing behind him*) so I would greatly appreciate being called by my real name. Peter.

WATSON: (*Chuckling*) Peter Rabbit!

PETER: Just Peter, which is one syllable shorter than White Rabbit, so it saves time saying it. Must save time! (*Glancing behind him*) Do you, by chance, have any extra time saved up that I could have? Just on loan, of course, for the time being at least.

WATSON: (*Chuckling more*) Peter Cottontail!

PETER: (*Exasperated*) Peter! Just plain Peter! (*To HOLMES*) I haven't time for your servant's silly puns!

SHERLOCK: I assure you, Peter, regardless of his tiresome puns, Doctor Watson is my right arm and has pulled me from many a briar patch. How long has your gold pocket watch been missing?

PETER: (*Gasping*) How did you know?

SHERLOCK: You asked if this would take long, so you're obviously in a hurry, yet you haven't checked your gold pocket watch once since we were..."unveiled," so to speak.

PETER: "Unveiled!?" What was unveiled? The Queen's new statue? Is it that time already? Oh no, if I missed that... Do you have the time? (*glancing behind him, then at WATSON*) YOU! You! Do you have the time? Time for what? I'm not sure, why do you ask?

WATSON: (*Looking at his watch*) Uh, five minutes before noon.

SHERLOCK: How long has it been missing?

PETER: The Unveiling is missing, too!? The entire statue!? She'll blame it on me. I know she will! Oh, my...

SHERLOCK: No, no! Your watch, Peter!

PETER: My watch!? It's been stolen. How should I know how long? I didn't have it after it was stolen so I have no idea of WHEN it was stolen! Ridiculous question! Total waste of time! One minute it was hanging on my vest, the next minute it was gone. (*Glancing behind him*) I guess it was a minute. It could've been three or four. I'm not sure, you see, because my watch was stolen. Poof! Just like that! Right off my vest! What time is it now?

WATSON: Why do you keep looking behind you?

PETER: To see what I've missed, obviously! Time flies, you know! Can you tell time, sir?

WATSON: You just saw me tell you...

PETER: Then what time is it? Come, come, hurry now, time's a wasting!

WATSON: Just about noon.

PETER: "ABOUT!?" "About!?" There is no such thing as "about." Exact, man, exact! Time is an exact science, not an "about" science. (*Glances behind him*) Quickly, quickly...!

WATSON: (*Checking his pocket watch*) Four minutes and ten seconds before noon.

SHERLOCK: Was there anyone near you at the time?

PETER: What time? Which time? Last time? This time? Next time?
Time keeps everything from happening at the same time! Some German chap said that. Or something like it! What was his name? I don't have time to think about it. (*Glancing behind him*) Anyone near me *when*?

WATSON: At the time your watch was stolen! For goodness sakes, rabbit, try to focus!

PETER: Focus! Yes, yes, good word, focus! But it requires time to focus, which I don't have. I don't think. No, no, no, there are no pickpockets in Wonderland. The time? When it happened? Uh, the Queen's progression was entering, Guards marching by, flag carriers, all that rot! How much time does it take for something to rot? Guess that depends upon what is rotting. (*RABBIT chuckles to himself then looks behind him*) I went to check the time, my watch was gone. Vanished! Fob and all. Why is it called a "Fob?" Never mind! I haven't time for the answer. I have no idea if I'm early or late or in between!! Am I late? Late for what? Who says I'm late? Did the Queen say I was late?

SHERLOCK: Would any of the guards want your watch?

PETER: Why? They can't tell time. Tea time! No, that's The Hatter's job! Besides, no one in Wonderland can even read! Time is limited so it mustn't be wasted learning to read! No, no, the Queen keeps her people quite... uninformed... at all times.

WATSON: Simple people don't make waves.

PETER: "Waves!?" What does an ocean possibly have to do with my watch!?! (*To HOLMES*) He is wasting valuable... WAIT! Time does affect tides and currents. Is it possible for an ocean to steal a watch? The only person to ever even touch my watch was Alice, when she was here. What time was that? A month ago? Yesterday? A year! "Thirty days has September, April, June and"... that old saying needs to be shortened! It takes too much time to say it. I'll have to work on that, when I have the time. Perhaps an octopus in the ocean could've reached out and snatched my watch! I guess that's possible. Alice was going to wind it for me, but being left handed she was winding it in the wrong direction. (*Glancing behind him*) Silly girl! So I took it from her. If she would've broken it, oh my, what a problem that would've created!

SHERLOCK: Similar to it being stolen, I imagine.

PETER: Yes, yes, it would've taken me some time to repair it, much too much time, and I really don't have that kind of time. Or do I? How much time do I have? Why are you asking me? I lost my watch.

SHERLOCK: The Queen said "items!" What else is missing?

PETER: I have no idea and haven't had time to find out. How long would an octopuses' tentacle have to be to reach...?

SHERLOCK: Is there anyone else we should speak to? Anyone who may be able to shed some light on these thefts?

PETER: The Mad Hatter! That lunatic is always taking... Light? Brilliant idea, sir! If I travel at the speed of light, I will actually slow down time. That could be my solution. Oh, yes, the Mad Hatter! He takes things and hides them in his nasty little tea pots. He thinks it's clever. I think it's a waste of time.

SHERLOCK: Where can we find The Mad Hatter?

PETER: *(Points off)* Down there! With the speed of light being 186,000 miles per second, how much time would that save me? I need a calculator. It's faster. If you follow the path you'll come to his tea party. It might be time for one. Or is it? Is it tea time? If I traveled at the speed of light would I burn up? Time to go, I think, but I'm not sure so I just keep moving until something happens. *(Exiting)* Good hunting, Mr. Holmes. Is it Hunting Season already? *(To WATSON)* What time is it?

WATSON: Noon. Exactly!

PETER: *(Exiting)* Oh, I hope I'm not too early... but better late than never...

SHERLOCK: One last question, Peter, if you please.

PETER: Quickly. Time is of the essence!

SHERLOCK: How did the Queen know of Dr. Watson and me?

PETER: Oh, dear... do you promise not to strike me? I haven't time to get knocked unconscious.

SHERLOCK: *You* told her!

PETER: Time to time, maybe twice a month, I venture up the rabbit hole, or back through the looking glass, which actually saves time – less climbing. While out there, I heard of your exploits. So, I suggested the Queen secure your services, for a short time.

WATSON: *(Rubbing his wrists)* She secured them alright!

PETER: She is very persuasive, and very impatient, and very dangerous, and it's time for me to go! *(ZOOM! The RABBIT is gone.)*

(A long moment as HOLMES and WATSON stand slightly stunned by the RABBIT's rapid departure.)

WATSON: Holmes, I sincerely hope we're actually home in our beds! Asleep! And this is simply

(HOLMES pinches WATSON.)

Ouch! Point taken! So, what now?

SHERLOCK: Well, Old Bean, since we have no idea how to get *back* to our beds...!

WATSON: We take the case?

SHERLOCK: We take the case!

WATSON: With no idea of what we're looking for, or whom?

SHERLOCK: We know The White Rabbit's pocket watch is one. That's a start.

WATSON: So in two hours time that dreadful Queen expects us to find out what and how many items are missing, and who took them? Or...!?

SHERLOCK: Our milliner will be gravely disappointed.

WATSON: I'd say the cards are stacked against us in this one.

(Chuckles)

SHERLOCK: No time for puns, Watson! *(Starting to exit)* Off we go! The game's afoot!

WATSON: Where to, Holmes?

SHERLOCK: We are inviting ourselves to a tea party.

(Festive music begins under WATSON's dialogue.)

WATSON: *(Excited)* A tea party! Wonderful! I could use a few scones. Those scoundrels did interrupt our breakfast. Will there be ladies present, Holmes? I do so enjoy the ladies at a festive tea party. The clinking of their cups, the jingling of their spoons, the dainty way they stir and sip their tea,

(THEY are exiting as lights fade and music intensifies.)

the giggling and gossiping over hot cups of Earl Grey...

BLACK OUT

Festive music eventually and slowly drops down to a sad drag, like a record slowing down, as lights come up on a long table. Sitting at the head of the table is a dejected MAD HATTER, sans his hat. His chin is in his hand and his elbow rests on the table as HE slowly fiddles with a spoon. There are no other guests and the tipped over cups and saucers have begun to gather cobwebs.

WATSON: *(Chuckling)* Look, Holmes! It's the Mad Hatterless

SHERLOCK: Spare me the puns, Watson!

HATTER: No, no, your chubby friend's predictable pun was spot on!

WATSON: "Chubby!?"

HATTER: *(Sulking)* Behold the Mad Hatterless! Like Samson losing his hair and then his strength, I can no longer host a decent tea party. Not that Samson ever hosted a tea party, but I think you see the analogy. I hope you brought your own sugar, 'cause I'm out. As a matter of fact, I'm out of tea, too. *(Sighing)* My supplier simply ignores my reorders. He knows it's hopeless. Tell me, is the Axeman following close behind you?

WATSON: No, I'd smell him.

HATTER: He should come grinning down the path anytime, anxious to put an end to my misery... which, at this point, I think I'd welcome.

SHERLOCK: The Queen has ordered us to find the stolen items. All is not lost, Hatter!

HATTER: Hatterless! There are others?

SHERLOCK: The White Rabbit's pocket watch, so far.

HATTER: Humph! He probably said I took it. *(Depressed)* Who knows! Maybe I did. Right now I wouldn't put it past me, considering my current state. Hundreds of invitations sent out... no one answers! Gold glittered ones, perfumed ones, ones with clever little pop ups of me inside— *with* my hat, of course... not one RSVP! Not even to the ones I sent out on the wings of snow white doves. They simply ate the doves and ignored the invites! Just tossed them in the trash. They say I'm... I'm... I'm...

WATSON: Hatless?

(HOLMES strolls about the table, checking tea pots.)

HATTER: Boring... without my hat I'm just a pathetic bore. They're right, you know! I'm just not the same without it. I've lost my fervor, my fire, my zeal, my zest, my...!

SHERLOCK: Yes, well, perhaps we can help get them all back. Precisely when...?

HATTER: *(Lamenting)* Without my hat I'm nothing but a shell with no peanut. A page with no words. A song with no tune. A loo with no paper. We were a team, my hat and I! Together we would cartwheel down the backs of the chairs, dropping the correct amount of sugar lumps into all my guest's tea cups, and along the way, swoop the March Hare's hanky right out of his vest pocket, blow my nose in it, cartwheel back and return it to his vest, without him ever knowing, and without my hat ever tumbling from my head. Then I'd sit and giggle in silence as he wondered where the purple snot came from.

WATSON: *(Disgusted)* "Purple snot!?"

HATTER: I take it you're not from around here.

SHERLOCK: I am Sherlock Holmes and this is my colleague Doctor Watson.

HATTER: I'd say pleased to meet you, but I'm so depressed I probably wouldn't mean it. Anyway, colorful snot is a sign of prestige in Wonderland.

WATSON: You don't say!

HATTER: Oh, yes! The Tweedle Brothers would sit right over there *(pointing)* and snort out matching hues of neon chartreuse that even glowed in the dark. The Dormouse... *(choking up)* ...the Dormouse – I think I miss the Dormouse the most - same chair, every party, polka dot snot.

WATSON: How special.

HATTER: Yes. My tea parties were very special.

SHERLOCK: I'm sure they were, but...

HATTER: This table was bathed in laughter, surrounded by sparkling conversations, and witness to *my* entertaining personal antics. Think me boasting but I don't care, I could toss a scone into the air and catch it in my mouth with my eyes closed. My eyes CLOSED! I could catch two scones. One time I did three. Pretty good, huh? Three scones. Gulp! Gulp! Gulp! Three! Almost choked to death on the third, but I did it! All gone. All gone. Like evaporated milk! Now... now... now I'm just boring. A lonely, tedious bore! *(HE pulls out a hanky and blows his nose, then holds up the hanky)* See! Even my snot is turning a boring grey hue.

WATSON: I say, a little decorum, please!

HATTER: *(HE sighs deeply and pats a corner chair to his right)* See this chair? This empty, empty chair. This was where Alice always sat, so she wouldn't bump elbows with any of the other guests. Those were such wonderful tea parties. Now... just... just... just *chairs!* There is nothing sadder than an empty chair, gentlemen. Nothing sadder! So, here I sit... just circling the drain, ready to go down... with no sugar. No lemon. No cream. No tea. No *(sobs)* GUESTS!

SHERLOCK: Precisely when was your hat stolen?

HATTER: The spiders have made homes of my tea pots. That should tell you!

WATSON: If memory serves me, you are called the Mad Hatter, not only for the obvious reason, but also because you never take off your hat.

HATTER: It was that or lose my head... which... I guess is going to happen anyway. Is that what is called irony?

SHERLOCK: You were ordered to remove it? By whom?

HATTER: The Queen. One of her Guardsman said she had demanded that I wash my hair or *(HE makes a throat cutting gesture and sound)*. It was getting very thick with scone crumbs. I always kept additional scones under my hat, for unexpected guests, such as yourselves. I used to keep them wrapped in my hanky but, well, even though colorful snot is highly regarded, it's not welcomed on scones.

WATSON: Understandable.

HATTER: So, I kept them under my hat where they remained fresh and moist and warm, and the warm sensation against my brain helped me cook up new ideas, like clever tea party favors, fun tea party games, silly tea party initiations... but, looky here!... no scones in my hair anymore, because there is *(sniffing)* no more hat to cover them. Forgive me, but I've found myself crying a lot lately, which is really not me. *(HE lets out a loud wail and buries his face in his hands)*

SHERLOCK: Uh, Mr. Hatter...

HATTER: HATTERLESS! (*Pounding his head on the table*)

HATTERLESS, HATTERLESS, HATTERLESS!

SHERLOCK: Certainly! How did this Guard know you kept scones under your hat, or that your hair was full of crumbs?

HATTER: Everyone knew – birds were constantly circling my hat, diving at it, trying to knock it off to get to the scones, and the crumbs. It was part of the fun and games at my tea parties... dodging the diving birds, avoiding their droppings... (*Looking up and sniffing*) ...I even miss their droppings!

SHERLOCK: Did this Guard, perhaps, admire your hat?

HATTER: Everyone admired my hat, sir, but no one would dare take it because it was uniquely me.

WATSON: Would you recognize that Guard?

HATTER: You've seen the Queen's Guards. They all look and act alike, cut from the same deck, you know?

SHERLOCK: (*Aside to WATSON*) Shocked you missed that one!

WATSON: As am I!

HATTER: Besides, that guard left before I even went to wash my hair.

When I finished, my hat was gone. Simple as that! (*Sobbing*) Along with my... my Hatter prowess. (*HE lets out another wail*)

WATSON: Oh, come now, sir, a hat doesn't make the man.

HATTER: Oh, really? (*HE pulls an Army Helmet out of a box next to his chair and puts it on*) Is this me? "HOLD THE LINE, MEN!" No! (*HE quickly exchanges the helmet for a very large cowboy hat*) Or this? "Round up them strays, boys!" NO! (*HE quickly exchanges the cowboy hat for a very flowery and fancy Easter Bonnet*) "Ladies, have you heard the gossip about Sir Joffrey?" No! (*HE quickly exchanges the bonnet for a Native American head dress*) "White man speak with forked tongue!" Nope! (*HE exchanges head dress for a horned Viking's helmet*) "ODIN!!!" None of them work! None of them are me! (*HE takes off the Viking hat and slumps back into his chair*) The hat most certainly DOES make the man, sir! And without mine... I'm just a tiring, unimaginative, insignificant, depressing, worthless bore.

SHERLOCK: The White Rabbit's Gold Watch! The Mad Hatter's hat!

Two things vitally important to the Wonderland story!

WATSON: (*Glancing at his pocket watch*) And we have no idea of how many more... even less of an idea of the culprit... and I think we've gotten all we're going to get from this poor chap.

SHERLOCK: Hatter, uh, Hatterless... is there anyone you feel we should speak with, someone who could, perhaps, help hasten this strange investigation?

HATTER: Try the Caterpillar! It may know something.

SHERLOCK: Where do we find the... Caterpillar?

HATTER: Just follow the path. *(HE drops his head onto the table with a clunk.)*

SHERLOCK: Come, Watson.

HATTER: *(Without lifting his head)* I'd wish you luck, but I'm so depressed I probably wouldn't mean it.

WATSON: He's beginning to depress *me*.

HATTER: Perhaps, before the Axeman arrives, I can just fade off into the darkness that surrounds me. Just a pile of grey dust on the ground, the same color my snot is turning! Let the wind carry me away like dead autumn leaves, forever forgotten.

(As HOLMES and WATSON begin to exit, HATTER begins singing, softly and sadly to himself.)

"Tea for two... and two for tea... a girl for you... a hat for me... tea for two... two for..."

(His voice is eventually overpowered by music as lights fade to black.)

BLACK OUT

Music transcends to a deep procession of tuba toots as lights come up on a very obese green CATERPILLAR sitting atop a mushroom that is bending under its weight. Scattered on and about the mushroom are various discarded food containers, i.e., cans, cereal boxes, fast food sacks, pizza boxes, etc. The CATERPILLAR is stuffing himself with a large hero sandwich as HOLMES and WATSON enter.

WATSON: I say, Holmes, isn't that thing supposed to be...?

SHERLOCK: Smoking a hookah! Another item critical to Wonderland!

CATERPILLAR: Are you from Long Wong's Chinese Restaurant? So where's my Moo Goo Gai Pan? And you'd better have my extra soy sauce! I do have my own chopsticks, *(rummaging through discards)* somewhere around here.

WATSON: What a disgusting sight! That Caterpillar's replaced one bad habit with another.

CATERPILLAR: Why are you standing over there? If you expect a tip, bring me my order. Come on! Chop, chop!

SHERLOCK: *(Approaching CATERPILLAR)* We are not from a Chinese restaurant.

CATERPILLAR: Oh? Jabberwock Pizza? Tweedle Brother's Chicken? Mock Turtle Tacos?

WATSON: *(Approaching CATERPILLAR)* Uh, we're from London.

CATERPILLAR: London!? Ugh! Fish and chips, trifles and scones, plum pudding, such borrrring dishes! Why can't you be from, say,

Paris? Ahhh! Paree! Crepes, boudin blanc, fioe gras, crème brulee... even saying them makes my mouth water.

WATSON: Frog legs, snails, pig's feet... French'll eat anything!

SHERLOCK: The Queen has demanded we find your missing hookah.

CATERPILLAR: (*Sighs*) I was wondering how long it would take her to discover it was missing. Well, she'll have my head for sure now! I will also wager that the delightful woman said she'd have *your* heads, too, if you did not successfully fulfill her "demand." Am I correct?

SHERLOCK: You know your Queen well.

CATERPILLAR: I certainly do! So well that I question why she would send two such incompetent outsiders to find my hookah when I haven't the slightest idea of its whereabouts?

WATSON: "Incompetent!?" (*Gesturing to HOLMES*) This, my green friend, is the famous detective Sherlock Holmes and I am...

CATERPILLAR: "Sherlock!?" What a dreadfully silly moniker! Never heard of him! But no use wasting his talents: see if he can "detect" another slice of pizza in one of those boxes. I believe I left one for a later...

WATSON: (*Offended*) We are *not* here to find your...

SHERLOCK: Watson!!!

WATSON: Well, the nerve of the bloke, Holmes! "Detect a slice of..."

CATERPILLAR: My, my, we are a testy chap! (*Chuckling*) Mustn't lose your head over something I said! That would greatly disappoint our lovely Queen.

SHERLOCK: Why is it that you think the Queen will "have *your* head" for something that was stolen *from* you?

CATERPILLAR: Narrow vision, "*famous detective Sherlock Holmes.*" All the Queen sees is that I am not living up to my contract of being a "hookah smoking caterpillar," thus I am merely fodder for her Axeman. A suitor for his axe. Chopped liver. Mince meat! Hmm! Mince meat. Mince Meat pie. I'd gladly pay you a "detective's fee" to find me one of those. Or are they seasonal?

SHERLOCK: I would think you'd rather us find your hookah!!

WATSON: And keep your head!

CATERPILLAR: That would be nice, of course. After all, one cannot eat very well without a head, can one? (*Chuckles*) Head! Oooh, Head Cheese! Yum! Have you ever sunk your teeth into a hefty helping of Head Cheese spread across a thin slice of Pita? (*Slurping*) Delicious! Even though it's not really cheese, you know! Actually it's a meat jelly flavored with...

SHERLOCK: (*Growing impatient*) We are quite familiar with Head Cheese, thank you. What were you doing when your hookah was stolen?

CATERPILLAR: (*Biting into the Hero sandwich*) Sleeping. Up there, in my cocoon. (*Glancing up*) Can't seem to fit in it nowadays.

WATSON: I can't imagine why.

CATERPILLAR: This sandwich could use a little snap. Do you have any grey poupon?

WATSON: Are you not ashamed of yourself? Look at you!

CATERPILLAR: I can't. My neck is too thick for me to look down.
(*Chuckles*)

WATSON: All the more target for the Axeman.

CATERPILLAR: What is your name, sir? You! The testy one!

WATSON: Watson. *Doctor* Watson.

CATERPILLAR: "Doctor!?" My, my, you seem quite proud of that.

WATSON: Yes, I take pride in my accomplishments, along with my appearance.

CATERPILLAR: Oh, you try to sting me, sir! (*Chuckles*) Obviously you are a rather judgmental person, but I believe I "detect" a hint of Prince Albert pipe tobacco. Am I correct?

WATSON: I occasionally smoke a pipe, yes.

CATERPILLAR: Ever tried to quit?

WATSON: Uh, a few years ago.

CATERPILLAR: And?

WATSON: (*Slightly humbled*) I gained ten pounds. (*Patting his belly*) All right here.

CATERPILLAR: Yes! You turned to food, as I have.

SHERLOCK: And I'd say you are just as judgmental, to dub us incompetent without knowing anything about us! But while you just sit here and stuff your green face, at least we are trying to solve these mysteries!

CATERPILLAR: "Mysteries!?" What else is missing?

WATSON: Thus far, the White Rabbit's Gold pocket watch, the Mad Hatter's hat, and your hookah.

CATERPILLAR: And – thus far – you've found none of them?

WATSON: Thus far.

CATERPILLAR: Thus, I repeat: incompetent!

WATSON: Now see here, we've just begun...

CATERPILLAR: *Thus*, since you are incapable of recovering my hookah, and if I must lose my head, then I shall lose it on my own terms - as a very contented, deliciously well-fed caterpillar.

SHERLOCK: Wouldn't you rather *live* as a hookah smoking caterpillar?

CATERPILLAR: If at all possible, certainly! But obviously - as the "*famous detective Sherlock Holmes*" seems to keep overlooking - my hookah is gone! Vanished in a puff of smoke, so to speak.
(*Chuckling*)

SHERLOCK: (*Aside to WATSON*) Missed that one, too!

CATERPILLAR: But it has not been a total tragedy. I have discovered a whole new world of wonderful delicacies and sensations and exotic tastes. It's as if my mouth has awakened from a long, deep sleep. I taste the air, the trees; I taste life!

SHERLOCK: (*Growing irritated*) Not much longer, because your "benevolent" Queen has given us just two hours to solve this case.

WATSON: Which is rapidly diminishing, and that means the time for keeping *your* head is, too!

CATERPILLAR: (*Chuckling*) Then I guess I'd better eat faster... since the "*famous detective Sherlock Holmes*" seems to be a bit – how do they say it in the Colonies – a bit "buffaloed" with this case. Oooh, buffalo! Mountain Oysters! Yum! Those Yanks and their delicacies!

SHERLOCK: (*Sharply*) *Gather your pride, Bug! And your senses!* Help us in some way, however small.

(*A moment.*)

CATERPILLAR: The Cheshire Cat. (*Goes back to eating sandwich*)

SHERLOCK: What about the Cheshire Cat?

CATERPILLAR: Cheshire sees and hears everything, and loves to talk about it.

SHERLOCK: How do we find it?

CATERPILLAR: Just keep walking down this path, the Cat will find you.

WATSON: Isn't this Cheshire... invisible?

CATERPILLAR: He comes and goes as he pleases, typical cat. Cat?

Catsup! Even that would improve this hopelessly hum-drum hero sandwich. Be prepared though, that Cheshire loves to hear himself talk.

SHERLOCK: Where does this path eventually lead; the one we've been following?

CATERPILLAR: Right back around to the Queen's courtyard, probably where you began your undertaking. Oops, how callous of me! (*Chuckles*) Bad choice of words! "Undertaking" is a bit too close to "undertaker," isn't it? And that's an individual I assume the two of you are not looking forward to meeting. (*Chuckles more*) Although most undertakers do lay out a very tasty funeral feast. In some countries, they actually serve the entire feast right *on* the dead body. I wonder how much pastrami they could spread across me? And cheddar cheese. It's yellow and would go well with my green, don't you think, "*famous detective Sherlock Holmes?*"

WATSON: I'm not hungry anymore.

SHERLOCK: Let's go, Watson, and leave this "insect" to gorge itself into oblivion.

(*THEY begin to exit.*)

WATSON: If it becomes a butterfly, it'll never get off the ground.

CATERPILLAR: Oh, should you spot a small oriental chap on a bicycle, please direct him to me! I've been craving Moo Goo Gai Pan for days. Ta Ta!

(Oriental music begins to play as HOLMES and WATSON exit. The CATERPILLAR continues to devour the sandwich as lights fade to black.)

BLACK OUT

Lights up as Oriental music fades and forest sounds are heard. HOLMES and WATSON wander in from SR. SL is a large boulder.

WATSON: *(Looking around cautiously)* How will we find an invisible cat, Holmes?

SHERLOCK: A floating grin, Watson. A floating grin.

WATSON: Yes, I recall now. After the grin the stripes appear.

SHERLOCK: Precisely. So keep a sharp eye out for...

(From behind the boulder the CHESHIRE CAT suddenly leaps on top of it. The CAT is silently clawing at HOLMES and WATSON, trying to appear both ferocious and sophisticated at the same time, but without being able to hiss or growl. As it claws at them, it notices something on one of its nails. It quickly preens the nail then goes back to clawing the air. HOLMES and WATSON look at each other, then back to the CAT. A moment.)

WATSON: Cat got its tongue?

SHERLOCK: I believe it has its entire mouth.

WATSON: *(Squinting)* By Godfrey, you're right, Holmes. It hasn't one!!

SHERLOCK: Very diabolical, my dear Watson; stealing the Cheshire Cat's grin!

WATSON: Number four.

SHERLOCK: *(Carefully approaching CAT, like a lion tamer)* Calm! Calm now. Calm yourself, Cat! We are here to help you retrieve your grin.

(The CHESHIRE stops clawing the air and cocks its head.)

WATSON: Do you think it understands, Holmes?

(By using its eyes and body, the CAT gives WATSON a look that says, "Of course I understand, fool!")

SHERLOCK: I believe it does, Watson. Can you try to... show us some answers to our questions? Perhaps by gesturing?

(The CAT is greatly offended that it would even be asked that question. Of course it can gesture. Its attitude in response to HOLMES would be, "I'm not some common housecat, so bring on the questions, Einstein!")

SHERLOCK: This should be interesting.

WATSON: Ah, yes, charades! I do so love charades.

SHERLOCK: What were you doing when your grin was, uh...*taken*?

WATSON: So glad you didn't say "disappeared."

SHERLOCK: Too redundant in this case.

(The CAT lays down on the rock and closes its eyes.)

You were sleeping.

(The CAT opens its eyes, rolls them in disbelief, and shakes its head NO.)

WATSON: You were cat napping!

(The CAT vigorously shakes its head YES and touches its nose.)

Let me handle this one, Holmes. I'm quite the expert at charades.

SHERLOCK: By all means!

WATSON: Did you notice anything unusual after your cat nap, besides your grin being missing, of course?

(The CAT hops off the boulder and crosses to SL, then marches across the stage on the DS side of the boulder and stops.)

A parade came by.

(The CAT shakes its head NO and makes a gesture to throat cutting.)

Ah, the Queen's Guard marched by after your nap.

(The CAT shrugs in frustration at WATSON's answer and shakes its head NO, then lays back down on boulder, closes its eyes and indicates with its paw the soldiers marching by.)

Aha, they marched by *while* you were napping?

(The CAT touches its nose and nods YES, and WATSON becomes excited.)

See, Holmes? I am quite accomplished at charades.

SHERLOCK: If the cat was asleep how did it know...?

WATSON: Holmes... I shall handle this.

SHERLOCK: Forgive me.

WATSON: If you were asleep, how did you...

(Before WATSON can finish the question the CAT hops off the boulder and points to the ground and acts as if it is tracking something.)

You lost something.

(The CAT shakes its head NO and repeats the gesture.)

You smell something on the ground.

(The CAT gives a frustrated shrug and shakes its head NO and repeats the gesture.)

You stepped in something.

(The CAT stops, walks over to WATSON and knocks on his forehead several times with his paw as if to say, "Anybody home!?" The CAT then demands HE watch more closely. The CAT, very purposefully so this ignorant human will finally understand, points to his eyes, then his feet, then to the ground.)

You saw their tracks!

(Again, the CAT touches its nose and nods YES, while its body language says "Finally!" WATSON is more excited.)

Oh, I do so love charades!

(The CAT is not impressed.)

SHERLOCK: Watson, not to interfere with your... investigation, but may I ask one question? Please?

WATSON: If you must.

SHERLOCK: *(Crosses to SR and strolls towards the boulder, then stops on its DS side)* Were the tracks of the Guards on this side of the boulder?

(The CAT cocks its head in a puzzling manner, but still touches its nose and nods YES.)

How were you laying on the boulder?

(The CAT hops on the boulder and lays down, facing the tracks.)

WATSON: That was two questions, Holmes, but I see what you're getting at. One of the Guards could have just reached over and ripped the grin right off the cat's face as they marched by. But wouldn't that hurt? Wouldn't the pain have awoken the cat?

SHERLOCK: The Cheshire Cat is, for lack of a better word, mystical, Old Boy.

(The CAT strikes a pose.)

It can make different parts of its body appear in one place, and others in another.

(The CAT is very impressed with itself.)

Its stripes over there, its grin over there, etc., but it is known for its grin, which, I believe, is the “center” of its magic, and without it, the Cat’s other magical powers are useless. Am I correct?

(The CAT touches its nose and nods YES.)

Watson, I believe it’s time we returned to the Queen’s court.

WATSON: What!? Why!? Have you solved this? How? Who? What? Tell me!

SHERLOCK: Not quite yet, Watson, because what I have to do next may prove very dangerous.

WATSON: Holmes, we’ve shared every peril.

SHERLOCK: And if I’m wrong, we’ll be sharing the AXEMAN’s ax. Come, Watson!

(As THEY are about to leave the CAT hops up and gestures wildly.)

WATSON: Wait, Holmes. The Cat is trying to tell us something.

(The CAT holds up two “fingers.”)

Uh, two words.

(The CAT nods YES and holds up one “finger.”)

First word.

(The CAT pantomimes taking a bite of something, then rubs its stomach and, without a mouth, tries to make an expression of “tastes good.”)

Uh, you have a stomach ache.

(The CAT shakes its head NO and repeats gesture with more emphasis on “good.”)

You ate something.

(CAT touches its nose and nods YES, then rubs its stomach again.)

And it was good?

(CAT jumps up and down excited and points at its nose and does a chopping action with its paws.)

Was good? Tastes good?

(The CAT frantically chops the air.)

Good? Just “Good?”

(The CAT jumps up and down and touches its nose and nods YES.)

All right, the first word is “Good.”

SHERLOCK: Watson, our time is short.

WATSON: Just a moment, Holmes! I'll solve this in no time.

(CAT tugs at its ear.)

Sounds like? The second word "sounds like..."

(The CAT nods YES, then looks up in the air, acts as if something is coming at it and ducks.)

Sounds like duck?

(The CAT jumps up and down and nods YES.)

Good and sounds like duck? Uh, Good stuck, Good truck, buck, cluck

(The CAT is frantically shaking its head NO.)

uh, Good muck, suck, pluck, tuck, Good puck, Good yuk...

SHERLOCK: It's "luck," Watson. The Cat is wishing us Good luck!

(The CAT rolls its eyes in disbelief at Watson's failure to grasp the correct word.)

Come! *(HE starts to exit)*

WATSON: *(Exiting)* Rhyming was never my strong suit.

(The CAT shakes its head in disbelief then lies back down on the boulder as music fills. I would like to suggest the song WHAT'S NEW, PUSSYCAT, but, again, cannot because of copyright considerations. So just ignore my mention of it, too.)

BLACK OUT

Lights up as HOLMES and WATSON await the entrance of the QUEEN. While WATSON stews, HOLMES paces.

WATSON: *(Finally)* Holmes, I do not appreciate being kept in the dark.

SHERLOCK: Appropriate place for a servant.

WATSON: Should we survive this, you need to reread my contract.

HOLMES: I want you as far away from *me* as possible when the Queen and her guards arrive. Trust me, Old Boy, it's for the best.

WATSON: But if something should go awry, how will I help...

SHERLOCK: If something should go awry, my dear Watson, we shall haunt Sleepy Hollow in a headless tandem.

(Royal Procession music begins.)

Over there, Watson! I mean it!

(WATSON begrudgingly crosses far from HOLMES. As in opening, the GUARDS enter, form their lines, and the AXEMAN stomps the pole.)

AXEMAN: YOUR ILLUSTRIOUS AND MOST MAGNIFICENCE AND ALWAYS BENEVOLENT ROYAL MAJESTY.

(The QUEEN enters, closely pursued by a very nervous WHITE RABBIT. SHE stops abruptly DC, and, again, the WHITE RABBIT runs into her rear end.)

QUEEN: You clumsy, hare ball! Get away from me!

WHITE RABBIT: Yes, your illustrious and most magnificence and always benevolent Royal Majesty. *(RABBIT scurries over near WATSON)*

WATSON: Hey, mate, got the time? *(HE chuckles at the RABBIT's exasperation)*

QUEEN: Well, Mr. Holmes? Thrill me!

SHERLOCK: Madam, I find this a complete waste of my time, and you a totally despicable woman and even worse of a Queen, and I shall now take my leave. *(HE turns to exit)*

QUEEN: Why, you pompous, arrogant... GUARDS!!

(Immediately all the GUARDS encircle HOLMES, their spears aimed at him.)

WATSON: HOLMES!!!

(The AXEMAN quickly crosses to WATSON.)

SHERLOCK: STAY AWAY, WATSON!!

(The spearheads are so close to him that HE must raise his arms to keep from being nicked. HE cautiously turns, looking at all the GUARDS.)

QUEEN: *(To her GUARDS)* HOW DO WE DEAL WITH INSOLENT?

ALL GUARDS: OFF WITH HIS HEAD!

QUEEN: Your head shall decorate my palace gate, Mr. Holmes!
(Gestures to WATSON) Alongside your chubby friend.

WATSON: Chubby!?

QUEEN: AXEMAN, TO THE CHOPPING BLOCK!

AXEMAN: *(Grinning at WATSON and forcing him upstage with his axe)*
My pleasure.

WATSON: *(To AXEMAN)* So nice to see a fellow enjoy his work.

SHERLOCK: DO YOU WANT YOUR THIEF OR NOT!?

QUEEN: WAIT!

(All movement stops.)

You are playing a very dangerous game, Mr. Holmes.

SHERLOCK: Forgive my ruse, your illustrious and most magnificence and always benevolent Royal Majesty.

QUEEN: Talk sense and talk quickly! My milk bath is growing tepid.

WHITE RABBIT: (*Hurrying to the QUEEN*) Is it that time already? Oh dear! I didn't know, your illustrious and most magnificence...

QUEEN: Oh, shuddup, poop beneath my foot! SPEAK, Mr. Holmes, while you still have a tongue!

SHERLOCK: I have deduced the whereabouts and identify of your Wonderland thief.

QUEEN: I'm waiting.

SHERLOCK: (*Indicating the spears encircling him*) Uh, may I?

QUEEN: (*To GUARDS*) Release him!

(*The GUARDS raise their spears and back away from HOLMES. HE slowly begins strolling among them.*)

SHERLOCK: Ah, much better. Thank you. To begin with, the items we have found missing, thus far, are all vital to Wonderland continuing to exist as... Wonderland, which, obviously, is the reason you "called upon" the services of the good Doctor Watson and myself.

QUEEN: You're boring me, Mr. Holmes.

SHERLOCK: Before I give you your thief, I must say that I do *not* believe the items were stolen to destroy Wonderland.

QUEEN: Then what? Why?

SHERLOCK: (*Still roaming about the various GUARDS*) After conversing with the various, uh, victims, and adding up a few small details, which, in my business, usually sum up to one grand detail that always seems to form itself into a solid fact...!

QUEEN: Ho-hum!

SHERLOCK: Deductive reasoning, your illustrious and most magnificence and always benevolent Royal Majesty. (*HE stops behind a specific GUARD*) The items that were stolen... as I said, were NOT stolen to *harm* Wonderland, but to... *verify its existence!*

(*HE whips the hood off a GUARD and it is ALICE. ALL gasp in shock.*)

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