

A Case of Lunacy

Characters:

Duffus McGee

A lunatic who thinks he is Sherlock Holmes

Miss Margaret Fluster

A kind, sweet-tempered young lady

Constable Henry C. Stately

A London Constable

Inspector Silas Watency, Jr.

A young Scotland Yard Detective

Mark Courier

A Mailman

Aaron De Byke

A Telegraph Boy

Scenes:

- 1. A Street in London*
- 2. Constable Stately's office*
- 3. The Scene of the Crime (Miss Fluster's Bedroom)*
- 4. Constable Stately's Office*

Note on Costumes: The play is set in the early 1900's in London, England*. Miss Fluster is dressed in ordinary garb, and the Constable Henry Stately wears the regular London constable's uniform, complete with truncheon. Inspector Silas Watency Jr. wears a normal everyday outfit, but has a Detective Badge pinned on the inside left pocket of his coat. Mark Courier also wears normal clothes, but has a Post Officer license and ID in his wallet. In scenes four and five he wears a large overcoat. The telegraph boy's outfit is a pair of trim knickers and matching coat and hat, and he rides an old bicycle. The costume of Duffus McGee is as follows. In the first three scenes, Duffus McGee is wearing baggy pants, oversized shoes, a suit coat, and a tweed hat. He carries a broken magnifying glass which has a large piece of tape across its centre, and has a pipe in his mouth; he should have a very comical manner of speech, and should walk in a very ridiculous fashion. However, in the fourth and fifth scene, he wears an inconspicuously different costume composed of clothes of the same color, only better fitting, but with the same accessories. Both he and Courier have large skilletts in their shirts in the last scene.

Courier and McGee have false facial hair and wigs, which need to be donned in such a way as to make them easy to take off at the end of Scene 4. The constable can have facial hair, but it is not necessary.

**It is to be noticed that not only the costumes, but also the voices of the actors need to be adjusted to this period, and a British accent will enhance the quality of the play.*

Scene 1: A street in London. Scenery includes Miss Fluster's house and a decorative wrought-iron fence running the length of the stage. There are two or three park benches along the fence, as well as a street lamp. The lighting is bright and cheerful.

At Rise: *Duffus McGee enters from stage left with Mark Courier. They converse casually.*

McGee: So, being a mailman, does that mean you get to drive one of those big red wagons with the fast black horses and the bells and have everyone scoot out of the way for you?

Courier: No, no, you are thinking of the firemen.

McGee: Firemen, mailmen— what is the difference?

Courier: There is a lot of difference. You see, a fireman goes to a fire—

McGee: A fireman *what*? Did you say a fireman sets fires? But that's criminal!

Courier: No, a fireman *puts out* the fire at someone's house; he doesn't start one.

McGee: Oh, I see. So he pays people to set a fire for him, so he can put it—

Courier: (*growing aggravated*) No, you've got it all wrong! The fireman is the good guy in this situation—

McGee: Oh, I thought— Oh, that's right, the mailman is the bad guy. I see!

Courier: No!

McGee: Well, isn't that what you said?

Courier: No, I didn't. I said—

McGee: You said that the fireman was the bad guy—

Courier: (*yelling*) No, I didn't! I didn't say that anyone was the bad guy—

McGee: Look, there has to be a bad guy to every case, doesn't there?

Courier: Yes, but this is not a case.

McGee: Then, what is it?

Courier: It's a simple summary of what a fireman is—

McGee: Because you are a fireman, and you're trying to tell me what you do as a job.

Courier: I am not a fireman; I am a mailman!

McGee: Fireman, mailman— what is the difference?

Courier: Here we go again! This discussion started with that!

McGee: With what?

Courier: Never mind! Drop the subject! Stop talking about firemen and mailmen.

McGee: Okay. So what do you do for a living?

Courier: I am a mailman— *(suddenly realizing; angrily)* No, I said to stop talking about my occupation!

McGee: I did.

Courier: But then you started it back up again.

McGee: When did I start what up again?

(Miss Fluster and Constable C. Stately come out of the house, and study the ground along the wall, while Courier and McGee continue)

Courier: *(changing subject)* So, what is Scotland like?

McGee: Same as it was when I left it.

Courier: I mean what was it like when you left it?

McGee: Oh, well, it was really Scotland, you know, nice and green, and sort-of cozy, not stuffy like London. But I like being in London none the less— Say, what's up over there? *(Points over to Constable C. Stately and Miss Fluster, as they slowly walk through to gate in the fence)* This looks like a case to me if I ever saw one.

Courier: Shh. *(They listen in)*

C. Stately: *(pulling out a notepad)* Now about what time did you say it happened?

Miss Fluster: *(composedly)* Sometime between nine o'clock and eleven o'clock last night. Mr. Luvilot dropped me off after the party, which ran until eleven, and when I saw the door ajar, I was very frightened because it was so dark. Grant always keeps a torch in his car, so he got it out, and we went in, and found it as you saw.

C. Stately: Hmm. Who would have known about the diamonds?

Miss Fluster: Grant is the only person whom I can call to mind, but it couldn't be him.

C. Stately: Are you sure? Where was Grant while you were at the party?

Miss Fluster: He was on a boat coming to England from France, where he had been on business.

C. Stately: In France?

Miss Fluster: Yes. He's a journalist; he went to France to cover for his partner who is sick. His boat arrived in the port at eleven o'clock, and he drove straight to the house where the party was, to pick me up.

C. Stately: Then it couldn't possibly be him.

Miss Fluster: And thank the Lord for that.

(McGee and Courier walk toward the constable and the young lady)

McGee: *(sauntering up)* So, what is up? I take it that you're on a case.

C. Stately: *(mildly sarcastic, with a chuckle, but not rudely)* Nope, we're not on a case. This Lady just hid her own diamonds from herself!

McGee: *(surprised)* Oh. I thought it looked like a case. Never mind.

C. Stately: I was being sarcastic.

McGee: *(laughing)* Oh, boy, you had me fooled there for a moment; I thought you were serious. Ha, ha, how silly of me.

C. Stately: *(looking at McGee's clothes)* Who are you anyhow?

McGee: My name is Sherlock Holmes. *(The constable blinks and looks askance at Courier)*

Courier: *(laughing; gesturing toward McGee)* Sir, this is Mr. Duffus McGee.

McGee: *(indignantly)* I'm Sherlock Holmes.

Courier: *(to C. Stately)* Never mind him. He's slightly off his nut. Thinks he's Mr. Holmes.

McGee: *(very indignantly)* But I am Sherlock Holmes, and I intend to solve this case.

(Courier and C. Stately laugh)

Courier: See what I mean?

C. Stately: Very nice to meet you, "Mr. Holmes". I'm Constable Henry C. Stately.

Courier: And I'm Mark Courier.

McGee, C. Stately and Courier: Nice to meet you. *(They shake hands)*

C. Stately: *(to McGee)* So you're going to solve this case, are you?

McGee: Certainly.

C. Stately: Alright. You can help me solve the case. You bring any of your findings to me, okay?

Miss Fluster: (*horrified*) Constable C. Stately! I'm appalled! To think that you would put a nutcase in search for my diamonds! You ought to be ashamed!

C. Stately: (*soothingly*) There, there, Miss Fluster, don't go blow your stack for nothing. You certainly don't think that I would desert your case like that! I'll still be on the case; just using Mr. McGee—

McGee: Holmes!

C. Stately: Yes, quite right, how could I forget? I'm just using Holmes to assist me, not to take over the case.

McGee: That is not true. I am taking over the case, not assisting anybody. I know more about solving cases than you do, Constable!

C. Stately: But I am the official Police officer, so I have to be at the top of the case or it is not legal. Even the real Sherlock Holmes cannot arrest anybody, because he is not an official detective of Scotland Yard, but an amateur detective, if you will, an unofficial detective of London. To arrest anyone, he has to have a real detective or constable with him to make it legal. Without me, therefore, you cannot arrest the criminal, even if you beat me to discovering his identity.

McGee: Okay, I see, but I do all the real detective work, right?

C. Stately: That is correct. Miss Fluster, why don't you go with this man to his office and give him enough information to get him started on the case?

Miss Fluster: I suppose there is no harm in having more people on the case. After all, I've given you all the information, so you can push forward with my case.

McGee: Constable, I am not an official detective, so I don't have an office.

C. Stately: You can use mine, as long as you leave it as tidy as when you arrive.

McGee: Thank you, Constable.

C. Stately: It's Headquarters 20 at Scotland Yard.

McGee: At Scotland Yard?

C. Stately: Yes. Most of the London constables have their offices at Scotland Yard.

McGee: Oh, alright. I appreciate it, Constable. Come with me, Miss Fluster.

Duffus McGee and Miss Fluster exeunt stage right

C. Stately: Good luck.

(The telegraph boy enters on his bicycle holding a telegram for Mark Courier)

Aaron: Where would I find a certain Mark Courier of Derbyshire?

Courier: I am he.

Aaron: Ah, Mr. Courier, I have a telegram for you. (*Climbs off bicycle*) It is from someone who has not wired his name, but I suppose that the contents will be explanatory of that; they usually are.

Courier: Thank you, and here is two pence for your trouble. (*Tosses a coin to Aaron, who mounts his bike. Courier reads the telegram, makes a face as if confused, shrugs his shoulders, and sticks the telegram in his pocket.*)

C. Stately: Ah, and Mr. Telegraph Deliverer, do me a favor. Here is a groat for your trouble. (*Tosses a coin to Aaron*) Tell Inspector Silas Watency of Scotland Yard to meet me here immediately, and that I shall be in the house, so for him to enter and find me there. He should be at Headquarters Number 32 right now, but if he is not he is probably in Headquarters 5 making a report of some sort.

Aaron: Yes, sir. I shall have him on his way presently.

C. Stately: Thank you, sir.

Aaron exits stage right

Courier: (*walking over to C. Stately*) Where is the Green Elm Tavern? I have to meet someone there presently.

C. Stately: It is on *Oak Tree Road*, which runs between *John's Wood Road* and *Lodge Road*, which is South East of the Lord's Cricket Ground.

Courier: How do I get there?

C. Stately: (*while talking carefully slips telegram from Courier's pocket without Courier knowing*) Follow *Grove End Road* until you reach *John's Wood Road*. Turn left and follow *John's Wood Road* until you reach *Oak Tree Road*, which will be on your right.

Courier: Thank you very much.

Courier Exits Stage Left

C. Stately: (*Reads telegram, and starts, then looks off stage right*) Thank you! This is just what I need! I think I can use this telegram to solve this case! (*Smiles and hurries into Miss Fluster's house as the curtain drops*)

Curtain

Scene 2: Constable Stately's office. The scenery is quite plain and orderly. There are two doors on either side of the stage, the one at stage left leading outside, and the one at stage right being that of a closet having a knob and key-hole. Both are shut. A window in the backdrop is preferable but not necessary. Two or three picture frames hang on the walls in random places, but one of them hides a small door about 4 inches square. This door is a secret compartment, and it is very necessary that it be able to open and close, as well as to hold a slightly small purse. The room contains a chalk-board, a large desk and several chairs, one at the desk and the rest along the wall. There is a telephone on the desk. A bookshelf can be added to the scenery, but is not necessary.

At Rise: *Duffus McGee and Miss Fluster enter the room through door at stage left.*

McGee: My, my! What a spacious compartment! I wish I were a constable so that I could have an office like this! *(After a moment's pause)* No. I would rather be a detective and have it anyway. *(Draws a chair from the wall to the desk)* Here, seat yourself and make yourself comfortable. It will be a frightfully rough interrogation, so be prepared for it.

Miss Fluster: *(Sitting in chair, a little timidly)* Must it be very frightening?

McGee: Indeed, Mademoiselle, because if it is not, we will have no success. After all, interrogations are interrogating, hence the name, otherwise, they would be called "questionations", which doesn't sound good.

Miss Fluster: Well, you are amusing, sir, even if you are a little bit of a nutcase.

McGee: My dear young lady, I am completely in my right mind, even more so than anyone else in London.

Miss Fluster: *(amused)* Well, lead on with the "interrogation".

McGee: Certainly, certainly. All right, now for the first question. What is your full name? *(Pulling out a notepad, and sitting in the chair behind the desk.)*

Miss Fluster: Miss Margaret Louise Fluster.

McGee: *(jotting it down)* Very well. Your first name, Miss Margaret?

Miss Fluster: (*giggling slightly*) Margaret.

McGee: Your last name?

Miss Fluster: Fluster

McGee: Can you spell that backwards for me?

Miss Fluster: (*slowly and hesitantly*) R....E....T....S....U....L....F

McGee: All right, Miss Fluster, what is it that you are missing?

Miss Fluster: My diamond ring and necklace.

McGee: How much are they worth, together?

Miss Fluster: 15,000 pounds

McGee: (*his eyes bulge; whistling*) My word! Who stole them?

Miss Fluster: The thief.

McGee: Be more descriptive?

Miss Fluster: I can't, for I don't know who the thief is, Mr. McGee! If I did, I wouldn't need you on this case.

McGee: Oh. I'm sorry, I didn't think of that. Hmm, so who was at the party?

Miss Fluster: I couldn't tell you that.

McGee: I'm sorry. Shall I phrase it differently?

Miss Fluster: Please.

McGee: Then who was not at the party?

Miss Fluster: I couldn't tell you that either. This is a waste of time!

McGee: Why can't you tell me who was not at the party?

Miss Fluster: Because there were no men at the party, but every lady in London was there.

McGee: Were there any women absent from the party?

Miss Fluster: I don't believe that there were. But why are you asking me all these things about the party? They're all irrelevant.

McGee: Oh. I apologize. I didn't mean to be talking about the party. I just did so without thinking.

Miss Fluster: Well, I will forgive you, but please stay on the topic. I haven't all day!
(*McGee ignores this comment, and is staring at the desk. He pulls out his broken*

magnifying glass and looks through it at something on the desk. Miss Fluster looks over to see what it is that McGee is looking at.) (Curiously) What are you doing?

McGee: It's an ant! It's got a piece of cheese or something in its mouth! *(McGee pretends to watch it crawl off the desk onto the floor, and crawls all over the floor watching it, holding his magnifying glass about an inch from the floor. The whole time he comments on its strength and speed)* My goodness, how fast it is. It's as speedy compared to other bugs as Jack's Beanstalk is compared to other plants. Wow! Have you ever noticed that an ant is similar to a horse, by the way it runs? I hadn't noticed before now! And it's carrying something the size of its head, and running that fast! I'm slow compared to it! Etc... *(McGee follows the ant to the wall and up the wall to where the picture frame hangs which covers the hidden door.)* Uhp, here it goes, here it goes! It's climbing up the wall! Vertically climbing! To climbing horizontally, tut, tut, we do that all the time, but vertically! My goodness, I would be able to climb up the side of Big Ben in the rain without a second thought! Etc...

(He follows the ant around the picture frame. Miss Fluster's patience is growing thin, and she starts fidgeting and then addresses McGee)

Miss Fluster: Mr. Duffus McGee, I—

McGee: Sherlock Holmes, Sherlock Holmes, please, get it right!

Miss Fluster: Mr. Holmes, I fail to see your purpose for crawling about in such an ill-mannered way, and I beg you to get up and attend to my needs, and cease attending to that tiny insect! *(McGee stands up straight and dusts himself off)*

McGee: I beg your pardon, Miss. I have an affinity for bugs, but if you insist— *(Returns to chair)*

Miss Fluster: I do insist.

McGee: Very well. *(The telephone on the desk rings)* How now, what is this? *(Picks up telephone)* Hello...No, he isn't here right now... He's on duty... Oh, really?...Well...what?... I am Sherlock Holmes, who else do you think I could be?...*(irritated)*What!...I dare say you— who are you?...Alright, well as I was saying, I dare say that you've never heard Sherlock Holmes' voice on the phone, Mr. Lestrade!...You have not!... Why, the nerve of you!...y...you...Then why are you calling when he isn't here?...Oh, is that so?... Well, guess what, I won't be answering this phone

again anyway!... Good-bye! (*hangs up*) Some impertinent caller telling me I'm not Sherlock Holmes! I'm going to call him back and tell him what I think of him! (*Picks up phone and begins dialing. Miss Fluster gets up and hurries over to McGee*) Hello... I want to speak to Mr. Lestrade of Scotland Yard...

Miss Fluster: Please don't call him back!

McGee: Oh, it's me, Sherlock Holmes. I wanted to tell y— Well now... You ought to treat people better on the phone...

Miss Fluster: (*grasping his arm, but getting shaken off*) Please Mr. McGee, hang up!

McGee: Well you should... (*to Miss Fluster*) What's that? Hang him up? Ah ha! That's just what I'll do!...(back into phone) What?... I can't, can I?... Well listen to this! (*Bangs the phone on the table, and then hangs up*) That'll fix him!

Miss Fluster: (*sitting back down in her chair*) It isn't good to be making enemies with detectives.

McGee: Of course not, so he should have been nicer.

Miss Fluster: No, you don't understand. Mr. Lestrade is a detective, so that counts for you too.

McGee: Is that so now? Then I'll call him back and tell him that he's the worst detective I have ever had dealings with, and I'll tell him that he ought to resign his position as a detective and move to San Francisco...

Miss Fluster: Oh no, that is the one thing that you mustn't do, to pick more of a fight with him! Come back over here and sit down.

McGee: (*grinning*) I guess I will. (*Takes a long breath*) After all, his ears must be really sore by now! (*Phone rings*) Now what? Blast that detective! (*Picks up phone and bangs it on table, then puts it up to his ear*) Have you had enough of calling me? (*Bangs on table again, and puts back up to ear*) I'll teach you to insult me!...(bangs telephone some more, then puts back up to ear) I am a respectable detective even if you aren't... (*confused*) What? You're not?...Then what are you?...Oh...(surprised)... Oh, I'm sorry, I'm very sorry, I... I didn't know it was you, I thought it was Mr. Lestrade... He called a minute ago and was extremely saucy and impertinent to me, said I didn't sound like Holmes, of all things... Laughing are you?... It was plain insolent!... Well, I'll forgive him... Okay,

I'll be over in a little bit... Thanks a lot... Good-bye. (*Hangs up; looking very embarrassed*) That was embarrassing.

Miss Fluster: What was?

McGee: That was Constable Stately on the phone. Oh well, Constable Stately is at your house and wants us to head over, he's found a piece of evidence that he wants to show us. We'll leave to go there in a few minutes; he said there was no rush, but as soon as I was done with you we were to go over there. Now let's see, I can't think of any more questions, so this interrogation is through. Thank you for patiently bearing with me, and you may leave, unless you, my kind young smart lady would like to assist me in the capture of the scurvy knave who stole your jewels.

Miss Fluster: I am obliged for your service, and I would love to assist in any way I can.

McGee: Good. Now, what I am trying to do is to set up a trap which will catch the thief red-handed. You see what I mean?

Miss Fluster: (*brightening*) I see. What kind of a trap?

McGee: (*draws picture #2 at end of script*) You see, this is rigged up to a door (*acts out italics with closet door as he speaks*) so that when the thief opens the door (*opens door, and a pair of muddy boots fall out in such a way as to block the door's closing*) the fist punches him in the head (*falls down; then sits up*), kind-of like you would see in a cartoon.

Miss Fluster: (*delighted*) Or in a boxing match.

McGee: (*just as delighted*) Exactly!

Miss Fluster: This trap is very funny, and could work, Mr. McGee. The problem would be to manage to get the thief to fall in it red-handed. You would have to be a fabulous detective to pull it off.

McGee: (*thoughtfully*) You are right. If the trap isn't well hidden and in the right place at the right time, and the thief isn't red-handed, it wouldn't work.

Miss Fluster: (*laughing*) And then if the thief fell in it he would even more completely deserve to go to jail. Ah, this has been a pleasant—(*Pretending to be really serious*) I mean, utterly horrid, terrifyingly frightening, and brutally mind-twisting "interrogation". I hope you gained enough information from me.

McGee: Oh, you have given me plenty of information.

Miss Fluster: (*kindly*) I want to take back everything I've said about your sanity, Mr. Mc—Mr. Holmes. You don't seem as insane as you did earlier. And your drawings are lovely.

McGee: Thank you for your kind remarks. Here, let me assist you to the door. (*McGee assists Miss Fluster to the door.*) Good-bye, and thanks for the information.

Miss Fluster Exits Stage Left

(*McGee returns the chair to the wall where it had been and erases the chalkboard. Then he walks over to shut closet door, but muddy boots are in the way. Picks up boots and looks at them a few seconds, then tosses them in closet.*) Nice boots. (*Then he stretches and pulls out his magnifying glass.*) Now, where did that cute, little ant go?

Curtain

Scene 3. The Scene of the Crime. (Miss Fluster's Bedroom) The stage should have a window in the backdrop, and a bed, as well as a jewelry box where the lost diamonds have been kept up to the time of the theft. The rest of the stage is decorated like a bedroom, but there is not much mandatory scenery. Thus, the appearance of this scene depends on the imagination of the play director, and is therefore extremely flexible, unlike the other scenes. A door at stage left leads from the room to the rest of the house. As it is evening, the lighting of the window and room are of a sunset red on one side of the room, and a shadowy blue on the other side, with long shadows everywhere.

At Rise: *Constable Stately and Inspector Watency are on stage with magnifying glasses inspecting walls and floor, as well as furniture. They are conversing with each other as curtain rises.*

C. Stately: I have no doubt that this is a professional job. There are no footprints or fingerprints anywhere. It could have been a man outside the open window with a long pole with a hook.

I. Watency: With a lot of blind accuracy. Nay, that could not possibly be the case. The person who stole the jewels has wiped away his footprints, so there are no clues which come from that direction. (*Picks up a button*) You don't suppose that this button is anything? It's kind of unique, three button holes and a brass edge.

C. Stately: (*Concentrating on baseboards with magnifying glass*) I hardly think it to be any evidence. You find all sorts of stuff like that in a lady's carpet. They seem to collect them. (*Watency tosses button away*) There might be footprints outside the door.

I. Watency: I already looked, but it appears that the thief leaped from the open window, and the "going in" footprints are muddled together and trampled on. (*Miss Fluster enters stage left through door*) Who is this?

C. Stately: (*introducing Miss Fluster*) This is our client, Miss Margaret Fluster.

I. Watency: It is a pleasure to meet you. I am Inspector Silas Watency of Scotland Yard.

Miss Fluster: It is nice to meet you, Inspector. I am grateful that you two can do this for me.

C. Stately: Why it's our pleasure Ma'am. Where are McGee, and Courier?

Miss Fluster: They should be here shortly. As I was waiting for McGee to come out, Courier showed up and went in to talk to McGee. They said for me to— Well here they are now. (*McGee and Courier enter*)

C. Stately: Hello, gentlemen. Let me introduce you to Inspector Silas Watency of Scotland Yard.

McGee and Courier: It's nice to meet you.

C. Stately: These two gentlemen are Mark Courier and Mr. Sherlock Holmes.

I. Watency: And *Who*?

C. Stately: And Sherlock Holmes, (really Mr. Duffus McGee), but he wants to be called Sherlock Holmes.

I. Watency: I see. It is nice to meet you, gentlemen.

Courier and McGee: It is nice to meet you, too.

McGee: Inspector, eh? An official detective? Where's your badge?

I. Watency: (*opening coat to display detective badge*) Here it is, Mr. Holmes. A pleasant crowd, Constable, that you have bid come.

C. Stately: (*While Duffus McGee is studying the carpet, and not paying attention*) You are right. (*To Miss Fluster*) And, now that we are all here, you can be sure that I won't keep you waiting very long. The truth of the matter is that this crime was done by an—

McGee: (*from back of Stage*) Wow, a brass clothes pin! (*holds up a metal clothes pin*)

C. Stately: We already saw that. As I was s—

Miss Fluster: Oh, Mr. Holmes, I have been looking for that. Please put it on the dresser there. Thank you for finding it.

C. Stately: As I was saying w—

McGee: Oh, you're welcome.

C. Stately: (*Raising his voice*) As I was saying, this crime has been done by an expert thief of some sort, for there—

McGee: Aha! A seedy old derby hat covered with dust! What A piece of evidence! (*Triumphantly displays an old derby hat*)

C. Stately: (*looking annoyed*) Ahem. We saw that too. Anyway—

Miss Fluster: Oh, there's no evidence in that, Mr. Holmes. That belonged to my grandpa, that's why it's so seedy and old.

C. Stately: Anyway, there is not one footprint or fingerprint left in the room. The only lead we have—

McGee: What luck! A button! (*Holds up the button that Watency threw down*)

C. Stately: (*really annoyed*) There are thousands of those over there!

McGee: This one is unique! It has *Three* button holes, and a—

C. Stately: We've already seen it! Stop interrupting!

McGee: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know I was interrupting anyone. (*Gets up, puts button in his pocket and joins the others*)

C. Stately: The only lead the we have been able to obtain is however a significant clue. This case that we are tracking today has little or no evidence of itself to present, but fortune has put the criminal within reach. This piece of evidence which I will produce will be a great lead for us. This is it. (*Draws from pocket telegram which he took from Courier.*) It's a telegram, taken from Mr. Courier's pocket. It reads as follows:

Unanimous
V2520969 PD

Mar. 28, 1904

Green Elm Tavern at 11:00. Back Billiard Room. Use back door from alley. Bring rent.

Twenty chickens must on dragon-fly ride from on waves to next pilot of boat. Hen farmers gather with neighbor's belongings. Complete remembrance we lovingly block. Leave the flag at half 'til mid when fence night.

76238A 54D

McGee: What?

I. Watency: Sounds like nonsense to me.

C. Stately: That's what I thought.

Courier: How do you happen to have my telegram?

C. Stately: I guess you could say that I pick-pocketed you, Mr. Courier. What is your real name?

Courier: (*confused*) What do you mean? Mark Courier is my real name.

C. Stately: There is only one explanation for this telegram. I have puzzled over the last paragraph for the longest time, but finally I know what it means! Skip every other two words and the second paragraph reads like this:

Must fly on next boat. Gather belongings. We leave at midnight.

McGee: Wow!

C. Stately: Let me see your ID and postman's license. (*Courier confusedly hands them to constable, who looks them over*) Aha! Watency, what do you think of this? (*Hands them to Inspector Watency and points at the photo on the ID*)

I. Watency: Well now, Stately, you are quite observant. (*Courier looks over shoulder of constable*)

Courier: (*curiously*) What is it?

C. Stately: (*seizing Courier by arm*) The ID is false, which makes the license false too!

Courier: (*Frowning*) What do you mean? What is wrong with my ID? How can you tell if something is false or not?

C. Stately: The picture is all crooked and wrinkled, but the rest of the card is completely flat. A true ID made in London is either all flat, or all wrinkled, and is in line with the rest of the card.

Courier: But mine was made in Derbyshire where I grew up.

I. Watency: Wrong again. In Derby they make them the same way as in London.

C. Stately: Watency, search him for other evidence. (*Inspector Watency searches Courier and pulls out a revolver. Courier gasps*)

I. Watency: A revolver!

McGee: Wait a minute!

C. Stately: I figured as much! Which pocket was it in?

McGee: You think that my friend is—

I. Watency: It was in his right coat pocket. A man suspected of a crime with a large bulky revolver, not a small pocket pistol, but a large heavy revolver in his pocket, fully loaded... How can so many things exist if he is not the criminal?

Courier: (*As if it has just struck him that he is suspected of the crime*) Why, you surely aren't blaming me of the crime! Why I didn't even know that gun was there! Honestly! And as to the ID, you ought to throw the guy who gave me an invalid ID in jail, not me!

C. Stately: Oh, trying to act innocent in the face of such evidence isn't smart. Do we have to add "Lying to the police" to the accusations? (*Courier looks downcast and worried but stays silent*) Come on, Watency, let's take him to my office to write to report, and cross examine him.

Constable and Inspector exeunt with Courier

McGee: You can't blame my friend of the theft! It's not true! I know for a fact that he didn't do the crime! Stop!

All Exeunt

Curtain

Scene 4. Constable Stately's Office. This Scene is set up exactly like Scene 2. If in Scene 2 a window or bookshelf were added to the scenery, the same is true for Scene 5, and the window should be dark. Trap 2 is set on the ground outside the door at stage left. It will be activated by a technical crew member (see instructions for trap).

At Rise: *Constable Stately and Inspector Watency (who is carrying the pistol, the telegram, the ID, and the postman's license) enter with the captive Mark Courier, followed closely by Miss Fluster and Duffus McGee.*

McGee: *(in a rage)* You will not write a report until I have had an opportunity to defend my friend! Your hypothesis is completely full of holes.

I. Watency: Stately, I'm going to let him speak what is on his mind.

C. Stately: Why? For what purpose should we listen to this maniac holler?

I. Watency: Because it is plain courtesy to let the man speak. Let him speak his mind, and he'll close his own mouth, and if we are on the wrong trail, he might put us where we need to be. *(To McGee)* Go ahead Mr. Holmes.

McGee: Thank you, Detective. *(Laughs a hearty laugh)* I was pretending to be mad, so I would get to speak, but I am not really angry. Anyway, pay attention while I blast this myth of Courier's guilt to smithereens. It seems that the constable is basing his whole attack on Courier on three things: The gun in the pocket of the coat, the telegram, and the false ID. Am I correct?

I. Watency: Absolutely! No one could have put it better.

McGee: Fabulous. Let me correct these three flimsy points which are butchering the truth. Point number one: the revolver. It was I who put the gun in his pocket, and he never knew it was there. Notice the initials "S. H." on the bottom of the pistol. *(Takes pistol from Watency, and points out what he speaks of)*

C. Stately: But “S.H.” doesn’t stand for Duffus McGee.

McGee: But I am not Duffus McGee. I am Sherlock Holmes. “S. H.”!

I. Watency: (*laughing*) I wonder why I didn’t think of that.

McGee: (*sets revolver on desk*) Point number two: the telegram. I wrote it to him just to frustrate you both. (*Constable Stately and Inspector Watency frown; McGee laughs*) So, I suppose that deletes the telegram. Point Number Three: the ID. I made it for him, and it is false, but He did not commit the crime, because at the time the crime was committed, we were both in a train coming here from Scotland! Um, please be seated. (*All sit in chairs by the wall except Duffus McGee (who sits on the edge of desk)*) And if you had been a little more observant, you would have noticed that the Post Officer’s License is false too! Ah, very well, enough of this fun. Let’s get down to the real business. You surely don’t think I would have had all that fun without some purpose for it all?

I. Watency: That had crossed my mind.

C. Stately: Mine too.

McGee: I really have had a lot of fun planning the whole thing too. Well, the truth of the theft shall soon be laid bare, because I can tell you everything that happened. (*Stately and Watency start*) Inspector Watency, are you aware that— (*There is a knock at the door*) Come in. (*Aaron, the telegraph boy, enters*)

Aaron: You told me to come, Mr. Mc—Holmes.

McGee: Ah, yes, I did. I want you to tell these people who wired that telegraph to Courier.

Aaron: Why, you yourself did, Mr. Holmes.

McGee: See what I tell you? (*to Aaron*) You said that you were not busy, and we can’t have too many witnesses. Do you want to stay and watch the outcome of this?

Aaron: I’d love to!

McGee: Good, then please be seated young man. (*Aaron eagerly enters and sits down in a chair*) As I had been saying, Inspector Watency I doubt if you are aware that you are on the completely wrong track, and are working against Miss Fluster in pursuing Mr. Courier. I intend to prove more firmly than ever that Courier is not the thief by tell you who the thief is.

I. Watency: Well if Courier isn’t thief, then who is?

McGee: The thief of the diamonds is present here in this room! I shall now unmask him! The thief is none other than Constable Stately himself! (*Points at the constable*)

C. Stately: (*acting surprised and offended*) Oh, come now! That is ridiculous and insulting!

McGee: Ridiculous, no, but insulting, yes. Yet it is completely true.

C. Stately: You are wrong! I am not a thief! I am a respectable constable, and I cannot imagine how you possessed yourself of such—

McGee: Hold your peace, Constable. You've given your evidence; it is only fair that now I get to produce mine. The first evidence I want to bring forth is that Miss Fluster lives on a guarded street. Only a constable could have pulled off the feat safely. Furthermore, Henry Stately is one of the several constables that guard that street, but he was not scheduled to be on duty the night of the crime, and he had not signed in at headquarters at the beginning of that shift. However, that night when the thievery took place, Miss Fluster ran out and got the constable, who happened to be Henry Stately, though he was not on duty that night. Also, I saw on the record in the headquarters that at the time of the theft, the constable on duty was off investigating a false alarm, at which time Miss Fluster's diamonds were stolen and Henry Stately started "investigating" the crime!

C. Stately: Hogwash and Pickle relish! You're a blasted liar—

McGee: You can defend yourself when I'm done, Henry. When I questioned Miss Fluster in this office this morning the place was tracked up with tracks identical to those outside the window of the Fluster Residence. Furthermore, (*walks over to closet and takes out the muddy boots and a constable's coat*) I found these pieces of evidence this morning.

C. Stately: My boots and coat! How are they evidence against me?

McGee: These boots have matching prints to the boot-prints which I just mentioned being in two different places. As to the coat, it bears much more convincing evidence than the boots. Maybe you remember this button, Detective Watency? (*Draws button from pocket*)

I. Watency: The button with the three holes, and the brass edge! My word!

McGee: It belongs on this coat right here. (*He holds up the right sleeve of the coat, which is missing a button.*) The button matches the other sleeve buttons.

Miss Fluster: It most certainly does.

C. Stately: This is completely absurd! Blaming a constable! Are quite finished?

McGee: Almost. I have one piece of evidence left to show. *(Laughs and walks over to the constable's desk, opens the top drawer and takes out a key. Constable Stiff leaps to his feet, objecting. Constable Stately begins moving slowly toward the revolver on desk. McGee takes the picture frame, which is hiding the secret little door, from the wall, disclosing that door. He unlocks the compartment with the keys, and opens it. He reaches in and pulls out a crimson purse. Everyone in the room gasps when they see it.)*

Miss Fluster: My diamonds! Oh, thank you!

McGee: *(carrying the purse toward Miss Fluster)* Why, your gratefulness is—

C. Stately: *(Jumping for desk and grabbing the pistol which sits on desk)* Put up your hands, all of you! Don't anyone resist! *(Everyone freezes and put up their hands, except for Miss Fluster, who begins to faint, and Watency who catches her)* McGee, put the diamonds on the desk. You'll get shot right through if you make the slightest objection. *(Points at the door at stage right (closet door))* Get in that closet now! *(Watency assists Miss Fluster to the closet. Aaron runs into the closet followed slowly by Courier. McGee doesn't budge)* You heard me! Get in there, Mr. McGee!

McGee: You mean, Holmes.

C. Stately: Bother Sherlock Holmes! I don't care who you are! Get in the closet!

McGee: I'm not afraid of you!

C. Stately: Don't try my patience! Get in the closet!

McGee: I think I have already given my answer!

C. Stately: I've given mine! *(A gunshot peals through the air as the constable pulls the trigger. McGee gives a cry of pain and topples over, landing with a thud on the floor. Mark Courier leaps out of the closet.)*

Courier: You villain! You'll pay for that. I'll—

(Mark Courier's sentence ends as abruptly as McGee's as another gunshot goes off. He groans and slumps over onto the floor. The people in the closet stare out in horror, and Henry Stately looks defiantly at the two corpses on the ground. He steps slowly over their bodies.)

Stately: *(grimly to the three people in the closet)* Who's next? Who's next to taste lead?

(There is no sound. Constable Stately closes the door and locks it with a key which he places in his pocket, then he picks up the crimson purse from the floor, takes a Carpet bag out from under his desk and places the purse in it. Then he puts the gun in his pocket and walks over to door at stage left. He opens the door, and suddenly is smacked in the face by the Trap, which is activated by a technical crew member or other actor. Constable Stately lands with a slam on the floor, and goes unconscious. If done correctly, the audience will have a big laugh here. When everything is quiet again, McGee moves his head slightly)

McGee: *(to Courier)* Psst!

Courier: *(sitting bolt upright)* Gosh, we did it!

McGee: *(crawling over to the constable)* He's plum out! Blank as cement! It worked!

Courier: That was kind-of scary, wasn't it?

McGee: Sort-of, but that's the sort of thing that detectives go through all the time. The right criminal fell in the right trap in the end! You get the pistol, and secure it. I'm going to get the key. *(Courier crawls over to the constable and handcuffs him with his own handcuffs. The two of them find the above-mentioned articles. McGee walks over to the closet, unlocks it, and opens it. Miss Fluster screams)*

Miss Fluster: *(terrified)* It's a ghost!

I. Watency: McGee! Oh my goodness! Are you alive?!

McGee: Why certainly. Are you disappointed?

I. Watency: Heavens, no! How wonderful! We thought you were shot!

Aaron: We thought you both were dead! How did you survive the bullets? And you aren't even bleeding!

McGee: Oh, the bullets never even touched us?

Courier: Of course not! *(Both Courier and McGee pull skillets out of their shirts. The other actors, with the exception of the unconscious constable, laugh and stumble out of the closet.)*

I. Watency: How did you contrive the whole affair?

McGee: Oh, I'm a detective, and detectives are good at that. Here are your diamonds, Miss Fluster. *(Opens the briefcase, and hands the crimson bag to Miss Fluster. Courier disengages the trap and closes the door)*

Miss Fluster: Thank you, sir. I am much obliged for all that you have done.

McGee: I knew that Stately was to blame from soon after the crime took place. The rest of the time I was trying to find adequate evidence to prove him guilty. (*Casually walks into closet, and looking around. Turns away from audience and takes off his disguise to disclose himself as the real Sherlock Holmes. The change still isn't noticed by the other actors.*)

Miss Fluster: (*to Watency*) The poor lunatic, he is so smart that he can catch the criminal, but he has to have this pitiful illusion that he is Sherlock Holmes.

I. Watency: You know, I don't really think he is that stupid any more. Somehow, he seems smarter than me, if only he didn't have the mental failure as to who he is. But I—

McGee: (*Walking out of the closet; a normal intelligent voice*) Oh, that's because I was pretending to be off my nut in the first place.

Miss Fluster: He is rather comical, don't you think? I want to make sure all of the diamonds are here. (*Sits down in a chair by wall and starts examining the contents of the purse. Watency watches her. They both ignore McGee.*)

McGee: (*picking up the telephone on the desk, and dialing a number.*) Hello..... Yes..... may I speak to your head officer.....Mr. Lestrade.....the— yes, that's right.....thank you... (*Pauses a moment*) Ah, hello.....I am calling to report on a case.....yes.....It is about the Fluster diamond theft.....That's right..... We have caught the criminal.....he is unconscious.....why, you will be very surprised when you see the criminal..... (*Laughs*)Yes. Let it suffice to say that we need you in Headquarters Office Number 20 immediately..... Scotland Yard!..... Don't ask questions. Just get a few constables to arrest the one we have here..... (*laughs again*) I told you..... Just be prompt..... Who?..... Why yes, how did you guess?..... My voice?..... I didn't know you were that sharp, Lestrade..... Thank you..... Yes..... Good-bye. (*Hangs up; to the other actors who look up and start*) He has gotten more proficient at relating names with voices on the telephone— why, what are you all looking at?

Aaron: (*rubbing his eyes*) Mackerel! Mr. McGee?

Miss Fluster: (*frightened*) My word, who are you?

McGee: Duffus McGee, at your service (*laughs heartily*), or if you like you can call me Sherlock Holmes, it's up to you.

I. Watency, Miss Fluster, and Aaron Together: (*in astonishment*) Mr. Sherlock Holmes? In Person?

Sherlock Holmes: In person. (*Miss Fluster almost swoons. Mr. Holmes runs over to help Watency support her.*) Oh, I am terribly sorry. I owe you a thousand apologies, Mademoiselle. I had no idea that you would be so affected by my unnecessarily dramatic appearance.

Miss Fluster: Oh, I am fine, actually, quite delighted to know that I had such a person as you doing me such a service as you have done me!

I. Watency: (*to Holmes*) I have always wanted to meet you, Mr. Holmes!

Holmes: Now, Watson, is the constable secured?

Courier (Watson): (*taking off fake wig and facial hair*) Yes, Mr. Holmes, he's a prisoner.

Holmes: Wonderful. I must congratulate you on your amazing performance today. I really had no idea that you could act that perfectly in such circumstances.

I. Watency: My word! I just got it! Courier is really Watson; that explains the fact that he wasn't a real mailman! Stately tried to blame Watson of the robbery, and escape free of blame! It seems so simple now!

Holmes: Precisely the case, my friend.

Miss Fluster: What I don't understand is how you came upon all of your evidence.

Holmes: Then I will tell you. I ask your pardon again for tiring you this morning with my watching the ant, especially since there was no ant.

Miss Fluster: What? No ant?

Holmes: Absolutely not.

Miss Fluster: Then why did you pretend there was one? Just to teach me patience?

Holmes: Oh, no. It was quite necessary, as it allowed me to study footprints and finger prints without your suspicion, also helping me to find where the diamonds were hidden.

I. Watency: What about the button?

Holmes: Well, you yourself found the button, only you didn't relate it to anything. I had been in this office this morning and found the muddy boots and the coat then, and seeing that a button was missing, I thought that it could have been lost on or around Miss Fluster's property.

Miss Fluster: And you were right. But how did you know about Stately's not being on duty?

Holmes: Mr. Lestrade placed me on the scent while he was yelling at me and I was yelling at him. He said, "He never showed up to clock in; how can he be on duty?" and I thought that interesting enough to look into.

Aaron: I'm amazed, Mr. Holmes. How can you see through such a thick plot?

Holmes: Observation and Deduction are the keys. In a nutshell, if you take away the falsities, whatever is left, no matter how impossible it may seem, must be the truth. That's Deduction. There is nothing simpler. Of course, you have to be observant for deduction to do you any good, or you will miss important facts. Put the ultimate Observation and the ultimate Deduction together, and ultimately no criminal can escape you. (*Opens door and stands in the doorway, hat and pipe in one hand, and doorknob in the other.*) And so, my dear Miss Margaret, can you tell me the most important lesson to be learned tonight?

Miss Fluster: I shouldn't trust a constable, just because he is a constable?

Holmes: I am sorry. That is not correct.

Miss Fluster: I should..... Speak kindly of everyone, because everyone is not as they seem?

Holmes: That also is incorrect.

Aaron: (*excitedly*) I know, I know! Be more observant, and deductive!

Holmes: (*laughing*) My, my, how very far from it! (*Aaron looks confused*)

Aaron: I don't know.

Miss Fluster: What is it?

Holmes: (*laughs*) It's very simple!..... (*Puts his hat on his head, and points with pipe for emphasis*)... Get a watchdog! (*Puts pipe in mouth, steps out, and closes the door.*)

Final Curtain

The End