

The Final Problem

Adapted from the writings of

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

By

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The Characters include:

Mr. Sherlock Holmes, the great detective

Dr. John H. Watson, his friend and biographer

Mrs. Hudson, Mr. Holmes' landlady

Alec MacDonald, A Scotland Yard Detective Inspector

Professor James Moriarty, The Napoleon of Crime

Frau Peter Steiler, Proprietress of der Englisher Hof

Young Petra, A worker at der Englisher Hof

Mrs. Mary Watson, The Good Doctor's Wife

Scene 1

221 B Baker Street

Watson: **M.C.1** *{Narration over Baker Street theme}* Looking back at my notes from the years 1887 through 1891, I see that I called upon Sherlock Holmes on Friday morning, the sixth of January, 1891, to see how his trip to France, requested by the French government, had gone. Holmes notified me of his return, and since my wife had just left for a short visit to her aunt, I was almost as free as a bachelor. **S.E.1** I had just barely let go of the heavy iron knocker when Mrs. Hudson opened the door for me to enter. **S.E.2**

Mrs. H.: Dr. Watson, Mr. Holmes will be so pleased to see you. He was extremely tired when he returned yesterday, but is in much better form today. By the way, you did recall that today is his birthday, did you not? I have got something special planned for dinner, which will do very nicely for two, if you care to stay.

Watson: As a matter of fact, I did, Mrs. Hudson. A dozen of his favorite cigars. And dinner sounds wonderful.

Mrs. H.: I'm sure that will do very nicely, Doctor. Just go on up. Tea will be up shortly.

Mrs. H. leaves and Holmes goes to his chair.

Watson: And how was France, my friend?

Holmes: Cold and dreary, Watson, but the government presented another challenging matter. You have heard me speak of Professor James Moriarty?

Watson: The famous scientific criminal, as famous among crooks as –

Holmes: My blushes, Watson.

Watson: *{Rushing to interrupt}* I was about to say, as he is unknown to the public or the police.

Holmes: A touch! A distinct touch! You are developing a certain un-expected vein of pawky humor, Watson, against which I must learn to guard myself. But, in calling Moriarty a criminal, you are uttering libel in the eyes of the law. The greatest schemer of all time, the organizer of every devilry, the controlling brain of the underworld, but so aloof from general suspicion, so immune from criticism, that he could hale you into court and emerge with a minimum of a year's worth of your pension as a solatium for his wounded character.

Watson: Be that as it may, I arrive bearing birthday greetings. *{Gives Holmes package of cigars, which Holmes unwraps}*

Holmes: Ah! Most appreciated.

Mrs. H.: **S.E.3** *{soft knock on door, and Mrs. H. comes in}* Mr. Holmes, Inspector MacDonald has arrived and requests a few minutes of your time, if possible.

Holmes: Of course. Let him come up, Mrs. Hudson. *{Mrs. H. leaves, MacD enters.}* Good morning Mr. Mac. I trust all is well at Scotland Yard. How can I assist you this morning?

MacD: *{Sits in chair. MacD speaks with a noticeable Scottish accent}* Good morrow to you, Mr. Holmes. And the good doctor as well. Tis good to see ye here, Doctor. I may as well come straight to the point of my visit. I'm sure that ye are aware Mr. Holmes, that we in the C. I. D. think that ye have a wee bit of a bee in your bonnet over this Professor Moriarty of yours. He seems a very respectable, learned, and talented sort of a man.

Holmes: I am very glad to see that you got so far as to recognize talent.

MacD: Ye cannae but recognize it! After I heard your view upon the gentleman, I made it my business to see him. We had a wee chat about eclipses. How the talk got that way, I cannae think; but he quickly had out a reflector lantern, a tennis ball, and a globe, and made it all clear in a minute. He lent me a book of his on the subject, but I dinna mind admitting that it was a wee bit over my head, though I did have a good Aberdeen upbringing. When he put his hand upon my

shoulder as we were parting, it was like a father's blessing before you leave into the cold, cruel world.

Holmes: Great. Great. Tell me, friend MacDonald: this pleasing interview was, I suppose, in the Professor's study?

MacD: Aye, tis so.

Holmes: A very fine room, is it not?

MacD: Very fine – very handsome indeed, Mr. Holmes.

Holmes: You sat in front of his writing desk?

MacD: Just so.

Holmes: Sun in your eyes and his face in shadow?

MacD: Well, it was evening, but I mind that the lamp was turned on my face.

Holmes: It would be. Did you happen to observe a picture over the professor's head?

MacD: I dinna miss much, Mr. Holmes. Maybe I learned that from you. I did see a painting, a young woman with her head on her hands, sort of keeking at you sideways.

Holmes: The painting was by Jean Baptiste Greuze, a well thought of artist who worked and flourished between the years 1750 and 1800. Modern criticism has more than endorsed the high opinion formed of him by his contemporaries.

MacD: Your thoughts move a bit too quick for me, Mr. Holmes. Ye leave out a link or two, and I canna' get over the gap. Of what use is this to the discussion about the Professor?

Holmes: All knowledge comes useful to the detective. Even the trivial fact that, in the year 1865, a picture by Greuze fetched one million two hundred thousand francs from the Louvre, more than forty thousand pounds, at the Portalis sale may start a train of reflection in your mind. Particularly if you note the fact that the

professor's salary is noted in several trustworthy references as 700 pounds per annum.

MacD: Then how could he afford to purchase---

Holmes: Precisely.

MacD: A little more about this picture, Mr. Holmes. I recollect that you told me that you never met the professor.

Holmes: No, I never have.

MacD: Then how do ye know about his rooms?

Holmes: That's another matter. I have been three times in his rooms, twice waiting for him under different pretexts and leaving before he came. I really cannot tell an official detective about the last occasion, when I took the liberty of running over his papers.

MacD: Did ye find anything compromising?

Holmes: Absolutely nothing. That was what amazed me. However, you have now seen the point of the picture. It shows him to be a very wealthy man. How did he acquire his wealth? He is unmarried; his older brother is a retired colonel, living on half-pay; and his younger brother is a station-master in the west of England. And yet, the professor owns a Greuze.

MacD: Ye mean that he has a very great income, and he must earn it in an illegal fashion.

Holmes: Exactly. Of course, I have other reasons for thinking so – dozens of exiguous threads which lead vaguely up toward the center of the web where the poisonous, motionless spider is lurking. I mention the Greuze because it brings the matter within the range of your own observation.

MacD: But where does this money come from? Forgery, coining, burglary?

Holmes: All of that, but none of it himself. He sells his brains for planning any illegal activity that comes into his view. If the enterprise needs physical

assistance, he provides it. His fee is a substantial for his services. He himself takes no part in the activity, so it is difficult to hold him accountable, and difficult to bring him to trial. Therefore, I heartily recommend to you the study of Professor James Moriarty.

MacD: Well, I am glad that we have had this little talk, Mr. Holmes. I will admit that I am not entirely convinced, but this will require a great deal of thought, so I will be bidding both of you gentlemen a good day. *{Rises to go.}*

Holmes: *{Not rising}* And to you, Inspector MacDonald. I would commend long and deep thought.

Watson: *{Rising to shake hand with MacD.}* Good day to you, Inspector. Please keep Holmes apprised of your progress. *{MacD leaves.}*

Holmes: And now, Watson, if you would be so good as to touch the bell, we can begin an investigation of the delights prepared for us by Mrs. Hudson. By the way, Watson, the challenging matter from the French government was a painting stolen from the Louvre seven months ago. *{Leaves.}*

Watson: That meal, one of Mrs. Hudson's most accomplished endeavors, was the last that I had seen of Sherlock Holmes for several months.

Scene 2

221 B Baker Street

{Holmes sitting in chair as Mrs. Hudson enters.} **M.C.2**

Mrs. H.: A gentleman just arrived, wishing to see you, Mr. Holmes. He did not give a name, but, when I asked for one, he said that you would be expecting him.

Holmes: And what does this gentleman who declines to identify himself look like, Mrs. Hudson?

Mrs. H.: Rather tall, sir, somewhat elderly, clean shaven, wearing a long black coat and has a tall hat. He walks with a slight stoop to his shoulders. His

forehead domes out in a wide, white curve, and his eyes are deeply sunken in his head. Oh, and there is something strange about the way he talks.

Holmes: Oh, yes, I was expecting him. Allow him to come up, Mrs. Hudson. *{As she leaves}* I do not expect him to stay long, but perhaps it would be better if you did not leave your sitting room downstairs until after he leaves. *{Rises and stands behind chair, with hand, holding curved stem pipe, in pocket}*

Moriarty: *{Enters and goes around behind what will be his chair, hands at waist, holding hat in left hand covering right hand. His speech emphasizes the “s” and “th” sounds to give a pronounced sibilant tone}* It is a dangerous habit to finger loaded firearms in one’s jacket pocket, Mr. Holmes.

Holmes: You will go straight from here to hospital if you persist in covering your right hand with your hat, Professor Moriarty. *{Both uncover hands to reveal pipe in Holmes’ hand and book in Moriarty’s. Both sit.}*

Moriarty: You have less frontal development than I would have expected.

Holmes: Whereas, you are precisely as I expected.

Moriarty: You evidently do not know me, though.

Holmes: On the contrary, I think it is fairly evident that I do. I can spare you five minutes if you have anything to say.

Moriarty: All that I have to say has already crossed your mind.

Holmes: Then possibly my answer has crossed yours.

Moriarty: You stand fast, then?

Holmes: Absolutely!

Moriarty: *{Paging through book}* You crossed my path on the 4th of January. On the 23rd you incommoded me; by the middle of February I was seriously inconvenienced by you; at the end of March I was absolutely hampered in my plans; and now, at the close of April, I find myself placed in such a position by

your continued persecution that I am in positive danger of losing my liberty. The situation is becoming an impossible one!

Holmes: Have you any suggestions to make?

Moriarty: You must drop it, Mr. Holmes. You really must, you know.

Holmes: After Monday.

Moriarty: What a pity. I am quite certain that a man of your intelligence will see that there can be but one outcome to this affair. *{Gradually becoming more emphatic}* It is necessary that you should withdraw. You have worked things in such a fashion that we have only one resource left. *{relaxing slightly}* It has been an intellectual treat to me to see the manner in which you have grappled with this affair, and I say, unaffectedly, that it would be a grief to me to be forced to take any extreme measure. You smile sir, but I assure you that it really would.

Holmes: Danger is part of my trade.

Moriarty: *{Emphatically}* This is not danger. It is inevitable destruction! You stand in the way not merely of an individual but of a mighty organization, the full extent of which you, with all your cleverness, have been unable to comprehend! You must stand clear, Mr. Holmes, or be trodden underfoot.

Holmes: I am afraid that, in the pleasure of this conversation I am neglecting business of importance which awaits me elsewhere.

Moriarty: Well, well, it seems a pity, but I have done what I could. I know every move of your game. You can do nothing before Monday. It has been a duel between you and me, Mr. Holmes. You hope to put me in the dock. I tell you that I will never stand in the dock. You hope to beat me. I tell you that you will never beat me. If you are clever enough to bring destruction upon me, rest assured that I shall do the same to you.

Holmes: You have paid me several compliments, Professor Moriarty. Let me pay you one in return when I say that if I were assured of the former eventuality I would, in the interests of the public, cheerfully accept the latter.

Moriarty: I can promise you the one, but not the other! *{Closes book, rises, puts on hat and walks down center aisle. S.E.4}*

Scene 3

Doctor Watson's Consulting Room

M.C.3

Watson: It was on the 30th of April that I next saw Sherlock Holmes. It was with great surprise when he arrived late that afternoon, not by the front door of my consulting room, but through the side door, the usual household route. I watched as he carefully surveyed the room, then edged around the room and closed the blind. It struck me that he was looking even paler and thinner than usual. There was also an air of concern about his demeanor. Holmes, are you afraid of something?

Holmes: Well, I am.

Watson: Of what?

Holmes: Of air-guns.

Watson: My dear Holmes, what do you mean?

Holmes: I think you know me well enough to understand that I am by no means a nervous man. At the same time, it is stupidity rather than courage to refuse to recognize danger when it is close upon you. I must apologize for calling in this manner, and I must further beg you to be so unconventional as to allow me to leave, as I arrived, by scrambling over your back-garden wall. Also, is Mrs. Watson in?

Watson: She is in, but she just finished packing for a visit, tomorrow morning. She will be gone for a week.

Holmes: Then it makes it easier for me to propose that you should come away with me for a week on the continent.

Watson: Where?

Holmes: Oh, anywhere. It's all the same to me.

Watson: Holmes, this is all very strange. It is not in your nature to take an aimless holiday, or any holiday as far as that goes.

Holmes: You remember our conversations about Professor Moriarty?

Watson: Er---oh, yes, the villain with the expensive taste in art?

Holmes: Precisely. I tell you Watson, in all seriousness, that recent cases have left me in such a position that I could continue to live in the quiet fashion which is most congenial to me. But I could not rest, I could not sit quiet in my chair, if I thought that that man was walking the streets of London unchallenged. He is the Napoleon of crime, Watson. He is the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city. He is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He sits motionless, like a spider in the center of his web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of every one of them. This was the organization which I deduced, and to which I have devoted my whole energy to breaking up.

Watson: Then why are we leaving now, when this has apparently reached a crisis?

Holmes: The professor was fenced around with safeguards so cunningly devised that, do what I would, it seemed impossible to get evidence which would convict in a court of law. My horror at his crimes was almost lost in my admiration at his skill. But at last he made a trip – only a little, little trip – but it was more than he could afford, when I was so close upon him. I had my chance, and, starting from that point, I have woven my net around him until it is now ready to close. In three days – that is to say, on Monday next – matters will be ripe, and the professor, with all the principal members of his gang, will be in the hands of the police.

Then will come the greatest criminal trial of the century and the clearing up of over forty mysteries.

Watson: Then why take this holiday now?

Holmes: If I could have done all this without the knowledge of Professor Moriarty, all would have been well. He was too wily for that. This morning, the final steps were taken, and three days of no action were absolutely necessary to complete the business. Within an hour of those final steps being taken, the professor himself paid a call upon me, making me fully aware of his complete knowledge of his impossible position.

Watson: You have already been assaulted?

Holmes: Three attempts have already been made upon my life, as I went to make certain arrangements with my brother Mycroft. After that discussion, I had no greater desire than a short holiday with my great friend Watson. Hence my surprising means of entry, and my closing your shutters upon entering your room. I am also compelled to ask your permission to leave your house by some less conspicuous exit than the front door.

Watson: You are welcome to spend the night here, and I am sure Mrs. Jeffries, our cook, can come up with a good evening meal.

Holmes: No, my friend, you would find me a most dangerous house guest. I have laid my plans, and all will be well. It is obvious that I can do no better than to get away for the few days which remain before the police can act.

Watson: Well, Mary could leave this evening, the practice is quiet, and I do have an accommodating neighbor. I should be glad to come.

Holmes: It would be best if Mary left tonight. Can you start tomorrow?

Watson: If necessary.

Holmes: Oh, yes, it is most necessary, as is the necessity of observing the following instructions most carefully, for now you are playing a double-handed game with me against the cleverest rogue and the most powerful syndicate of

criminals in Europe. You will dispatch whatever luggage you intend to take by a trusty messenger unaddressed to Victoria to-night. In the morning, you will send for a hansom cab, instructing your man to accept neither the first nor the second which may present itself. The third most probably should be acceptable. Into this hansom you will jump, and you will drive to the Strand end of the Lowther Arcade, handing the address to the cabman upon a slip of paper with the request that he will not throw it away. Have your fare ready, and the instant that your cab stops, dash through the Arcade, timing yourself to reach the other end at a quarter past nine. You will find a small brougham waiting close to the curb, driven by a fellow with a heavy black cloak tipped at the collar with red. Into this you will step, and you will reach Victoria in time for the Continental Express.

Watson: Where shall I meet you?

Holmes: At the station. The second first-class carriage from the front will be reserved for us.

Watson: The carriage is our rendezvous, then?

Holmes: Yes. And now, since it is half past four, I shall leave your premises by climbing over your rear garden wall, getting to Mortimer Street, where, two blocks away, the carriage I arranged for will arrive.

Scene 4

Victoria Station

Watson: **M.C.4** In the morning, I obeyed Holmes' instructions to the letter. A hansom was procured with such precautions as would prevent its being one which was placed ready for us, and I drove immediately after breakfast to the Lowther Arcade, through which I hurried at the top of my speed. A brougham was waiting with a very massive driver wrapped in a dark cloak, who, the instant that I had stepped in, whipped up the horse and rattled off to Victoria Station. On my alighting there, he turned the carriage and dashed away again without so much as a look in my direction. I reached the train carriage, the only one with a "engaged"

sign upon it with my luggage with three minutes until departure time. Imagine my surprise when I found it already occupied by a venerable old Italian priest.

Holmes: *{In disguise}* Buona sera, er...ah, good morning signor.

Watson: I am very sorry father, but this was to be a private carriage for the trip to the ship to France.

Holmes: Pardon. Io er, er I am ... how you say ritorno al Roma, ah, oh yes, going back to Rome. The ... how you say ah porter said it would be all right.

Watson: **S.E.5** This is most unfortunate, but the train is leaving, and I am not sure where my friend is, and the train is just starting to leave the station.

Holmes: *{Removing disguise}* Well, then, it is a very good thing that I got here early, and you haven't even condescended to say good-morning. I am very glad that the train is leaving the station, as here comes Professor Moriarty.

Watson: So that's what he looks like. He does seem rather angry that he cannot get the train stopped.

Holmes: Have you seen the morning paper, Watson?

Watson: No, I did not have time.

Holmes: You haven't heard about the fire in Baker Street, then. They set fire to our rooms last night. No great harm was done.

Watson: Holmes, this is intolerable. Is Mrs. Hudson all right?

Holmes: Quite safe. I saw to it that both she and the maid were not home last night. The irregulars tell me that the damage was confined to the sitting room and my bedroom. I must have lost them after their first three attacks failed before I reached your office. By the way, did you notice your coachman?

Watson: No. Should I have?

Holmes: It was my brother Mycroft, stirred from his lethargy. Somehow, Moriarty must have found out, and came to Victoria, as it is the only logical choice.

Watson: **M.C.5** As this is an express, and as the boat runs in connection with it, I should think we have shaken him off most effectively. *{A second thought dawns}* That is, unless he engages a special.

Holmes: That is precisely what I would do. This train does stop at Canterbury for thirty minutes, and there is always at least a quarter hour delay at the boat. He will catch us there.

Watson: One would think that we were the criminals! Let us have him arrested upon his arrival.

Holmes: That would be to ruin the work of three months. We should get the big fish, but the smaller would dart right and left out of the net. On Monday, we shall have them all. Therefore, we shall get off at Canterbury.

Watson: Therefore, we did get off at Canterbury. I am too old a traveler to allow myself to be seriously inconvenienced by the loss of my luggage, but I confess that I was annoyed at the idea of being forced to dodge and hide before a man whose record was black with unutterable infamies. It was evident, however, that Holmes understood the situation more clearly than I. At Canterbury, therefore, we alighted, only to find that we should have to wait an hour before we could get a train to Newhaven, our next destination.

Holmes: Another train coming. Already, you see.

Watson: Far away, from among the Kentish woods there rose a thin spray of smoke. A minute later, a carriage and engine could be seen flying along the open curve which leads to the station. **S.E.6** We had hardly the time to take our place behind a pile of luggage when it passed with a rattle and a roar, beating a blast of hot air into our faces. On the engine, along with the engineer and stoker, was a figure cloaked in black.

Holmes: Well, the question now is whether we should take a premature lunch here, or run our chance of starving before we reach the buffet at Newhaven.

Scene 5

The Road to Meiringen

Watson: We made our way to Brussels that night and spent two days there, moving on upon the third day as far as Strasburg. On the Monday evening, Holmes had telegraphed to the London police, and in the evening, we found a reply waiting for us at our hotel.

Holmes: I might have known it. He has escaped!

Watson: Moriarty?

Holmes: They have secured the whole gang with the exception of him. He has given them the slip. I think that you should better return to England, Watson.

Watson: Why?

Holmes: Because you will find me a dangerous companion now. This man's occupation is gone. He is lost if he returns to London. If I read his character right, he will devote his energies to revenging himself upon me. He said as much in our short interview, and I fancy that he meant it.

Watson: That is an entirely unacceptable proposition, particularly to one who is an old campaigner and an old friend. There will be no discussion of the matter. I propose that we should move on toward Geneva.

Holmes: As you wish.

Watson: **M.C.6** For a charming week we wandered up the valley of the Rhone, and then, branching off at Leuk, we made our way over the Gemmi Pass, still deep in snow, and so, by way of Interlaken, to Meiringen. It was a lovely trip, the dainty green of the spring below, the white of the winter above; but it was clear to me that never for one instant did Holmes forget the shadow which lay across him.

In the homely Alpine villages or in the lonely mountain passes, I could still tell by his quick glancing eyes and his sharp scrutiny of every face that passed us, that he was well convinced that, walk where we would, we could not walk ourselves clear of the danger.

Holmes: I think that I may go so far as to say, Watson, that I have not lived wholly in vain. If my record were closed tonight I could still survey it with equanimity. The air of London is sweeter for my presence. In over a thousand cases I am not aware that I have ever used my powers upon the wrong side. Of late I have been tempted to look into the problems furnished by nature rather than those more superficial ones for which our artificial society is responsible. Your memoirs will draw to an end upon the day that I crown my career by the capture or extinction of the most capable and dangerous criminal in Europe.

Watson: Oh come now Holmes. Let's not talk of ends yet. Here we are at the Englisher Hof, reputed to have services rivalling those of the best hotels in London.

Frau S. *Guten abend, meinne Herren. Ich bin..*

Watson: *{interrupting}* I beg your pardon, madam, but we were told that the staff of your hotel all spoke English.

Frau S. Oh, I am *sehr*, er most sorry, but I made the assumption that, since you arrived by walking, you were part of one of the German walking groups. Most English people arrive by carriage.

Holmes: A most observant woman.

Watson: *{to Frau S.}* We were planning on spending the night here, walking on to tomorrow, if we can have accommodations, as well as dinner and breakfast.

Frau S. *Sehr gut*, er ah very good sir. I have two rooms on the first floor, as you English say, with beautiful views across the fields to the forest. *Meinne*, er ...ah my husband, Herr Peter Steiler, worked for three years at the Grosvenor Hotel in

London to learn the business of running a good hotel with an excellent restaurant. We have tried to do that here in Meiringen.

Holmes: I think rooms with a clear view, and a good English dinner would be excellent.

Watson: As do I. Oh, and a good breakfast also.

Frau S. Very good gentlemen. And where will you be going next?

Watson: We were considering going to Rosenlauri.

Frau S. In that case, you should not miss the falls at Reichenbach. They are spectacular at this time of the year. It is only a short detour in the walk. About halfway up the hill, you will see a small but well-worn path that goes off to the right. You cannot miss it.

Watson: Thank you very much, madam. It sounds very interesting, eh Holmes?

Holmes: Indeed it does. As do the meals.

Scene 6

The Reichenbach Falls

Watson: **M.C.7** The following morning, after a splendid night's sleep, surrounded by two delicious meals, Holmes and I set out for Rosenlauri.

S.E.7*{Sound of falls begins}* It was a bright, warm, sun-lit day, and we easily found the detour and, after a short climb, reached the falls. It is, indeed, a fearful place. The torrent, swollen by the melting snow, plunges into a tremendous abyss, from which the spray rolls up like the smoke from a burning house. The shaft into which the river hurls itself is an immense chasm, lined by glistening coal-black rock, and narrowing into a creaming, boiling pit of incalculable depth, which brims over and shoots the stream onward over its jagged lip. The path has been cut halfway around the fall to afford a complete view, but it ends abruptly, and the traveler has to return as he came.

Petra: *{from rear of room}* Herr Doctor Vatson! Herr Doctor Vatson. *{runs to front via center aisle, out of breath}* Herr Doctor Vatson! *Der kommt zu hof eine Englischer Damen...*

Watson: I am Doctor Watson. Please, stop and take catch your breath, child, and then explain yourself, in English so we can understand, what you desire.

Petra: *{much slower than before}* Herr....Doctor Vatson, an English lady arrived at the hotel very soon after you and Mr. Holmes departed. She *ist sehr krank*...very sorry, she is very ill. She had wintered at Davos Platz, and was travelling now to join her friends at Lucerne, when a sudden coughing fit overtook her. Frau Steiler believes that she cannot live more than a few hours, and she refuses to see a Swiss Doctor. She says that she would consider your return to the hotel to be a great favor if you would come to see her and perhaps help her.

Watson: Holmes, an Englishwoman, dying, perhaps alone in a strange land? It sounds like consumption. I must try to help if I can, although I cannot save her. If she is that ill, she should not die alone.

Holmes: Of course, you must go. The lady deserves the comfort. I feel a need for contemplation at present, and this is surely an appropriate place. If you have not returned here in four hours, we will not reach Rosenlauri this evening, and I will return to Meiringen, where we can spend another night. Go with the girl and care for your patient.

Watson: Thank you Holmes. I do have my medical duties.

{Petra and Watson leave.}

Holmes: *{M.C.8 Removes pen and paper from pocket & begins to write.}*

Moriarty: *{Moves behind Holmes.}* Good afternoon, Mr. Holmes. We meet again, as I foretold.

Holmes: Ah, Professor Moriarty. Your arrival means the final act of the comedy can begin.

Moriarty: I would hardly call this finale a comedy, sir.

Holmes: I would like to ask your patience while I finish this short note to Watson. I do appreciate your managing Watson's removal from this scene.

Moriarty: I bear no animus for the man, and it would serve no purpose to needlessly bring sorrow to his spouse. It was an interesting game to follow your progress across Europe. Thank you for the challenge.

Holmes: *{Finishes writing and puts note in cigarette case}* Then where shall we finish this final conversation between the two of us? The path that ends at the falls?

Moriarty: I can think of no more fitting location.

{The two men move off to the rear. Sound of falls increases.}

Scene 7

Dr. Watson's House

Watson: *{ M.C.9 Enters center aisle very slowly, and finds Mary in her chair, sewing. }*

Mary: Welcome home, dear. Was your trip with Mr. Holmes successful?

Watson: Holmes is gone.

Mary: Where to this time?

Watson: No. Gone., forever. He fell into the falls. We were at the Reichenbach falls, when I received a summons to return to the hotel to assist a seriously ill woman. The girl who brought the message left me on my return, and when I arrived at the hotel, there was no ill woman. I rushed back to the Falls, but it was too late. All that I found was Holmes's alpine-stock and his cigarette case containing a letter to me. Moriarty must have been there, because two sets of

footprints went toward the edge. There were signs of a scuffle, but no return footprints. Here, read the letter for yourself. *{Hands her cig. case}*

Mary: *{Opens case, flattens letter}* My dear Watson, I write these few lines courtesy of Mr. Moriarty, who awaits my convenience for the final discussion of those questions which lie between us. I am pleased to think that I shall be able to free society from any further effects of his presence, though I fear that it is at a cost which will give pain to my friends, and especially, my dear Watson, to you. I have already explained to you, however, that my career had in any case reached its crisis, and that no possible conclusion to it could be more congenial to me than this. Indeed, if I may make a full confession to you, I was quite convinced that the summons from Meiringen was a hoax, and I allowed you to depart on that errand under the persuasion that some development of this sort would follow. I made every disposition of my property before leaving England and handed it to my brother Mycroft. Pray give my warmest greetings to Mrs. Watson, and believe me to be, my dear fellow, very sincerely yours, Sherlock Holmes.

John, you must write this for your friends and his. The story must be told, and I am sure that writing it will bring you peace of mind.

Watson: You are most likely correct, my dear. I'll get around to it sometime.

Mary: *{Pours Watson a brandy and gets his writing case for him}* You know the sooner you begin, the easier it will be. Mrs. Jeffries will have dinner ready in about an hour, so you should have time to make a good start. *{Leaves}*

Watson: *{ Takes sip of brandy, puts sheet of paper in front of him, picks up pen & writes, looks displeased, crunches paper, takes fresh sheet, big gulp of brandy & starts to write again. Narrates M.C.10 }* It is with a heavy heart that I take up my pen to write these the last words in which I shall ever record the singular gifts by which my friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes was distinguished. In an incoherent and, as I deeply feel, an entirely inadequate fashion, I have endeavoured to give some account of my strange experiences in his company from the chance which first brought us together at the period of the "Study in Scarlet", through to his arduous pursuit of that Napoleon of Crime, Professor James Moriarty. There have

been fleeting mentions of this latter affair in the *Journal de Geneve* and the Reuter's dispatch which was reprinted in several English newspapers. There are few details that remain to be told. An examination by experts at the Reichenbach Falls leaves little doubt that a personal contest between the two men ended, as it could hardly fail to end in such a situation, in their reeling over, locked in each other's arms. Any attempt at recovering the bodies was absolutely hopeless, and there, deep down in that dreadful cauldron of swirling water and seething foam, will lie for all time the most dangerous criminal and the foremost champion of the law of their generation. The Swiss child who brought my summons back to the hotel was never found again, and there can be no doubt that she was an agent of that nefarious villain. I can only hope that, in my simple and halting way, I have paid fitting tribute to him whom I regard as the best and wisest man whom I have ever known.