

"THE CROWN DIAMOND:  
AN EVENING WITH SHERLOCK HOLMES"

By

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE



CHARACTERS

MR SHERLOCK HOLMES - The Famous Detective

DR. WATSON - His Friend

BILLY - Page to MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES

COLONEL SEBASTIAN MORAN - An Intellectual Criminal

SAM MERTON - A Boxer

SCENE

*MR HOLMES' ROOM AT BAKER STREET*

*It presents the usual features, but there is a deep bow window to it, and across there is drawn a curtain running upon a brass rod fastened across eight feet above the ground, and enclosing recess of the window.*

*Enter WATSON and BILLY*

WATSON

Well, Billy, when will he be back?

BILLY

I'm sure I couldn't say, sir.

WATSON

When did you see him last?

BILLY

I really couldn't tell you.

WATSON

What, you couldn't tell me?

BILLY

No, sir. There was a clergyman looked in yesterday, and there was an old bookmaker, and there was a workman.

WATSON

Well?

BILLY

But I'm not sure they weren't all Mr. Holmes. You see, he's very hot on a chase just now.

WATSON

Oh!

BILLY

He neither eats nor sleeps. Well, you've lived with him same as me. You know what he's like when he's after someone.

WATSON

Yes, I know.

BILLY

He's a responsibility, sir, that he is. It's a real worry to me sometimes. When I asked him if he would order dinner, he said, 'Yes, I'll have chops and mashed potatoes at seven-thirty the day after tomorrow.' 'Won't you eat before then, sir?' I asked. 'I haven't time, Billy, I'm busy,' said he. He gets thinner and paler, and his eyes get brighter. It's awful to see him.

WATSON

Tut, tut, this will never do. I must certainly stop and see him.

BILLY

Yes, sir, it will ease my mind.

WATSON

But what is he after?

BILLY

It's this case of the Crown Diamond.

WATSON

What, the hundred-thousand-pound burglary?

BILLY

Yes, sir. They must get it back, sir. Why, we had the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary both sitting on that very sofa. Mr. Holmes promised he'd do his very best for them. Quite nice to them he was. Put them at their ease in a moment.

WATSON

Dear me! I've read about it in the paper. But I say, Billy, what have you been doing to the room? What's this curtain?

BILLY

I don't know, sir. Mr. Holmes had it put there three days ago. But we've got something funny behind it.

WATSON

Something funny?

BILLY

*(laughing)* Yes, sir. He had it made.

*(BILLY goes to the curtain and draws it across, disclosing a wax image of HOLMES seated in a chair, back to the audience.)*

WATSON

Good heavens, Billy!

BILLY

Yes, sir. It's like him, sir. *(Picks the head off and exhibits it)*

WATSON

It's wonderful! But what's it for, Billy?

BILLY

You see, sir, he's anxious that those who watch him should think he's at home sometimes when he isn't. There's the bell, sir. *(Replaces head, draws curtains)* I must go.

*BILLY exits*

*(WATSON sits down, lights a cigarette, and opens a paper.)*

*Enter a tall, bent OLD WOMAN in black with veil and side-curls.*

WATSON

*(Rising)* Good day, ma'm.

WOMAN

You're not Mr. Holmes?

WATSON

No, ma'm. I'm his friend, Dr. Watson.

WOMAN

I knew you couldn't be Mr. Holmes. I'd always heard he was a handsome man.

WATSON

*(Aside)* Upon my word!

WOMAN

But I must see him at once.

WATSON

I assure you he is not in.

WOMAN

I don't believe you.

WATSON

What!

WOMAN

You have a sly, deceitful face - oh yes, a wicked, scheming face. Come, young man, where is he?

WATSON

Really, madam!

WOMAN

Very well, I'll find him myself. He's in there, I believe. *(Walks towards bedroom door and gets behind settee.)*

WATSON

*(Rising and crossing)* That is his bedroom. Really, madam, this is outrageous!

WOMAN

I wonder what he keeps in this safe.

*(She approaches it and, as she does so, the lights go out, and the room is in darkness save for 'DON'T TOUCH' in red fire over the safe. Four red lights spring up, and between them the inscription 'DON'T TOUCH'. After a few seconds, the lights go on again and HOLMES is standing beside WATSON.)*

WATSON

Good heavens, Holmes!

HOLMES

Neat little alarm, is it not, Watson? My own invention. You tread on a loose plank and so connect the circuit, or I can turn it on myself. It prevents inquisitive people becoming too inquisitive. When I come back I know if anyone has been fooling with my things. It switches off again automatically, as you saw.

WATSON

But, my dear fellow, why this disguise?

HOLMES

A little comic relief, Watson. When I saw you sitting there looking so solemn, I really couldn't help it. but I assure you, there is nothing comic in the business I am engaged upon. Good heavens! *(Rushes across room, and draws curtain which has been left partly open)*

WATSON

Why, what is it?

HOLMES

Danger, Watson. Airguns, Watson. I'm expecting something this evening.

WATSON

Expecting what, Holmes?

HOLMES

*(Lighting pipe)* Expecting to be murdered, Watson.

WATSON

No, no, you are joking, Holmes!

HOLMES

Even my limited sense of humour could evolve a better joke than that, Watson. No, it is a fact. And in case it should come off - it's about a two to one chance - it would perhaps be as well that you should burden your memory with the name and address of the murderer.

WATSON

Holmes!!

HOLMES

You can give it to Scotland Yard, with my love and a parting blessing. Moran is the name, Colonel Sebastian Moran. Write it

down, Watson, write it down! 136, Moorside Gardens, N.W. Got it?

WATSON

But surely something can be done, Holmes. Couldn't you have this fellow arrested?

HOLMES

Yes, Watson, I could. That's what's worrying him so.

WATSON

But why don't you?

HOLMES

Because I don't know where the diamond is.

WATSON

What diamond?

HOLMES

Yes, yes, the great yellow Crown Diamond, seventy-seven carats, lad, and without flaw. I have two fish in the net. But I haven't got the stone there. And what's the use of taking them? It's the stone I'm after.

WATSON

Is this Colonel Moran one of the fish in the net?

HOLMES

Yes, and he's a shark. He bites. The other is Sam Merton, the boxer. Not a bad fellow, Sam, but the Colonel has used him. Sam's not a shark. He's a great big silly gudgeon. But he's flopping about in my net all the same.

WATSON

Where is this Colonel Moran?

HOLMES

I've been at his elbow all morning. Once he picked up my parasol. 'By your leave, ma'm,' he said. Life is full of whimsical happenings. I followed him to old Straubenzee's workshop in the Minories. Straubenzee made the airgun - fine bit of work, I understand.

WATSON

An airgun?

HOLMES

The idea was to shoot me through the window. I had to put up that curtain. By the way, have you seen the dummy? (*Draws curtain*)

*(WATSON nods)*

Ah, Billy has been showing you the sights. It may get a bullet through its beautiful wax head at any moment.

*Enter BILLY*

HOLMES

Well, Billy?

BILLY

Colonel Sebastian Moran, sir.

HOLMES

Ah, the man himself. I rather expected it. Grasp the nettle, Watson! A man of nerve. He felt my toe on his heels. (*Looks out of window.*) And there is Sam Merton in the street - the faithful but fatuous Sam. Where is the Colonel, Billy?

BILLY

Waiting-room, sir.

HOLMES

Show him up when I ring.

BILLY

Yes, sir.

HOLMES

Oh, by the way, Billy, if I am not in the room, show him in just the same.

BILLY

Very good, sir.

*Exit BILLY*

WATSON

I'll stay with you, Holmes.

HOLMES

No, my dear fellow, you would be horribly in the way. *(Goes to table and scribbles note.)*

WATSON

He may murder you.

HOLMES

I shouldn't be surprised.

WATSON

I can't possibly leave you.

HOLMES

Yes you can, my dear Watson, for you've always played the game, and I am very sure that you will play it to the end. Take this note to Scotland Yard. Come back with the police. The fellow's arrest will follow.

WATSON

I'll do that with joy.

HOLMES

And before you return I have just time to find out where the diamond is. (*Rings bell*) This way Watson. We'll go together. I rather want to see my shark without his seeing me.

*Exit WATSON and HOLMES into bedroom*

*Enter BILLY and COLONEL MORAN, who is a fierce, big man, flashily dressed; he carries a heavy cudgel*

BILLY

Colonel Sebastian Moran.

*Exit BILLY*

*(COLONEL MORAN looks round, advances slowly into the room and starts as he sees the dummy figure sitting in the window. He stares at it, then crouches, grips his stick, and advances on tiptoe. When close to the figure, he raises his stick.)*

*HOLMES comes quickly out of the bedroom door*

HOLMES

Don't break it, Colonel! Don't break it!

COLONEL

(staggering back) Good Lord!

HOLMES

It's such a pretty little thing. Tavernier, the French modeler, made it. he is as good at waxwork as Straubenzee is at airguns. (*Shuts curtains*)

COLONEL

Airguns, sir. Airguns! What do you mean?

HOLMES

Put your hat and stick on the side table. Thank you. Pray take a seat. Would you care to put your revolver out also? Oh, very good, if you prefer to sit upon it.

*(COLONEL sits down.)*

I wanted to have five minutes chat with you.

*(HOLMES sits down near him and crosses his legs.)*

COLONEL

I won't deny that I intended to assault you just now.

HOLMES

It struck me that some idea of that sort had crossed your mind.

COLONEL

And with reason sir, with reason.

HOLMES

But why this attention?

COLONEL

Because you have gone out of your way to annoy me. Because you have put your creatures on my track.

HOLMES

My creatures?

COLONEL

I have had them followed. I know that they come to report to you here.

HOLMES

No, I assure you.

COLONEL

Tut, sir! Other people can observe as well as you. Yesterday there was an old sporting man; today it was an elderly lady. They held me in view all day.

HOLMES

Really, sir, you compliment me! Old Baron Dowson, before he was hanged at Newgate, was good enough to say that in my case what the law had gained the stage had lost. And now you come along with your kindly words. In the name of the elderly lady and of the sporting gentleman I thank you. There was also an out-of-work plumber who was an artistic dream - you seem to have overlooked him.

COLONEL

It was you - you!

HOLMES

Your humble servant! If you doubt it, you can see the parasol upon the settee which you so politely handed to me this morning down in the Minorities.

COLONEL

If I had known, you might have never -

HOLMES

Never have seen this humble home again. I was well aware of it. But it happens you didn't know, and here we are, quite chatty and comfortable.

COLONEL

What you say only make matters worse. It was not your agents, but you yourself, who have dogged me. Why have you done this?

HOLMES

You used to shoot tigers?

COLONEL

Yes, sir.

HOLMES

But why?

COLONEL

Pshaw! Why does any man shoot a tiger -  
the excitement - the danger!

HOLMES

And, no doubt, the satisfaction of freeing  
the country from a pest which devastates  
it and lives on the population?

COLONEL

Exactly!

HOLMES

My reasons in a nutshell!

COLONEL

*(springing to his feet)* Insolent!

HOLMES

Sit down, sir, sit down! There was  
another, more practical reason.

COLONEL

Well?

HOLMES

I want that yellow Crown Diamond.

COLONEL

Upon my word! Well, go on.

HOLMES

You know I was after you for that. The  
real reason why you are here tonight is to  
find out how much I know about the matter.  
Well, you can take it that I know all  
about it, save one thing, which you are  
about to tell me.

COLONEL

*(sneering)* And, pray, what is that?

HOLMES

Where the diamond is.

COLONEL

Oh, you want to know that, do you? How the devil should I know where it is?

HOLMES

You not only know, but you are about to tell me.

COLONEL

Oh, indeed!

HOLMES

You can't bluff me, Colonel. You're absolute plate-glass. I see to the very back of your mind.

COLONEL

Then, of course, you see where the diamond is!

HOLMES

As, then you do know. You have admitted it!

COLONEL

I admit nothing.

HOLMES

Now, Colonel, if you will be reasonable, we can do business together. If not, you may get hurt.

COLONEL

And you talk about bluff!

HOLMES

*(Raising a book from the table)* Do you know what I keep inside this book?

COLONEL

No, sir, I do not.

HOLMES

You!

COLONEL

Me?

HOLMES

Yes, sir, you! You're all here, every action of your vile and dangerous life.

COLONEL

Damn you, Holmes! Don't go too far!

HOLMES

Some interesting details, Colonel. The real facts as to the death of Miss Minnie Warrender of Laburnum Grove. All here, Colonel.

COLONEL

You - you devil!!

HOLMES

And the story of young Arbuthnot, who was found drowned in the Regent's Canal just before his intended exposure of you for cheating at cards.

COLONEL

I - I never hurt the boy.

HOLMES

But he died at a very seasonable time. Do you want some more, Colonel? Plenty of it here. How about the robbery in the train-de-luxe to the Rivera, February 13, 1892? How about the forged cheque on the Credit Lyonnais the same year?

COLONEL

No; you're wrong there.

HOLMES

Then I'm right on the others! How, Colonel, you are a card-player. When the other fellow hold all the trumps, it saves time to throw in your hand.

COLONEL

If there was a word of truth in all this, would I have been a free man all these years?

HOLMES

I was not consulted. There were missing links in the police case; but I have a way of finding missing links. You may take it from me that I could do so.

COLONEL

Bluff, Mr. Holmes, bluff!

HOLMES

Oh, you wish me to prove my words! Well, if I touch this bell it means the police, and from that instant the matter is out of my hands. Shall I?

COLONEL

What has all this to do with the jewel you speak of?

HOLMES

Gently, Colonel! Restrain that eager mind! Let me get to the point in my own humdrum way. I have all this against you; and I also have a clear case against both you and your fighting bully in this case of the Crown Diamond.

COLONEL

Indeed!

HOLMES

I have the cabman who took you to Whitehall and the cabman who brought you away. I have the commissionaire who saw you beside the case. I have Ikey Cohen who refused to cut it up for you. Ikey has peached, and the game is up.

COLONEL

Hell!

HOLMES

That's the hand I play from. But there's one card missing. I don't know where this King of Diamonds is.

COLONEL

And you shall never know.

HOLMES

Tut, tut! Don't turn nasty. Now, consider. You're going to be locked up for twenty years. So is Sam Merton. What good are you going to get out of your diamond? None in the world. But if you let me know where it is - well, I'll compound a felony. We don't want you or Sam. We want the stone. Give that up, and so far as I am concerned you can go free so long as you behave yourself in the future. If you make another slip - then, God help you. But this time my commission is to get the stone, not you. (*Rings bell.*)

COLONEL

But if I refuse?

HOLMES

Then - alas - it must be you, not the stone.

*Enter BILLY*

BILLY

Yes, sir.

HOLMES

*(To COLONEL)* I think we had better have your friend Sam at this conference. Billy you will see a large and very ugly gentleman outside the front door. Ask him to come up, will you?

BILLY

Yes, sir. Suppose he won't come, sir?

HOLMES

No force, Billy! Don't be rough with him. If you tell him Colonel Moran wants him he will come.

BILLY

Yes, sir.

*Exit BILLY*

COLONEL

What's the meaning of this, then?

HOLMES

My friend Watson was with me just now. I told him that I had a shark and a gudgeon in my net; now I'm drawing the net and up they come together.

COLONEL

*(Leaning forward)* You won't die in your bed, Holmes!

HOLMES

D'you know, I have often had the same idea. For that matter, your own finish is more likely to be perpendicular than horizontal. But these anticipations are morbid. Let us give ourselves up to the unrestrained enjoyment of the present. No

good fingering your revolver, my friend,  
for you know perfectly well that you dare  
not use it. Nasty, noisy things revolvers.  
Better stick to airguns, Colonel Moran.  
Ah! I think I hear the fairy footstep of  
your estimable partner.

*Enter BILLY*

BILLY

Mr. Sam Merton.

*Enter SAM MERTON, in check suit and loud necktie, yellow  
covert coat*

HOLMES

Good day, Mr. Merton. Rather damp in the  
street, is it not?

*Exit BILLY*

MERTON

*(To COLONEL)* What's the game? What's up?

HOLMES

If I may put it in a nutshell, Mr. Merton,  
I should say it is all up.

MERTON

*(To COLONEL)* Is this cove tryin' to be  
funny, or what? I'm not in the funny mood  
myself.

HOLMES

You'll fell even less humorous as the  
evening advances. I think I can promise  
you that. Now, look here, Colonel, I'm a  
busy man and I can't waste time. I'm going  
into the bedroom. Pray make yourselves  
entirely at home in my absence. You can  
explain to your friend how the matter  
lies. I shall try over the Barcarolle upon  
my violin. In *(looks at his watch)* five  
minutes I shall return for your final  
answer. You quite grasp the alternative,

don't you? Shall we take you, or shall we have the stone?

*Exit HOLMES, taking his violin with him*

MERTON

What's that? He knows about the stone?

COLONEL

Yes, knows a dashed sight too much about it. I'm not sure that he doesn't know all about it.

MERTON

Good Lord!

COLONEL

Ikey Cohen has split.

MERTON

He has, has he? I'll do him down a thick 'un for that.

COLONEL

But that won't help us. We've got to make up our minds what to do.

MERTON

Halt a mo.' He's not listening, is he?  
*(Approaches bedroom door)* No, it's shut.  
Looks to me as if it was locked.

*(Music begins.)*

Ah! There he is, safe enough. *(Goes to curtain.)* Here, I say! *(Draws it back, disclosing the figure.)* Here's that cove again, blast him!

COLONEL

Tut! It's a dummy. Never mind it.

MERTON

A fake, is it? (*Examines it, and turns the head.*) By gosh, I wish I could twist his own as easy! Well, strike me! Madame Tussaud ain't in it.

*(As MERTON returns towards the COLONEL, the lights suddenly go out, and the red 'DON'T TOUCH' signal goes up. Figures must transpose at that moment. After a few seconds the lights readjust themselves.)*

MERTON

Well, dash my buttons! Look 'ere, guv'nor, this is gettin' on my nerves. Is it unsweetened gin, or what?

COLONEL

Tut! It is some childish hanky-panky of this fellow Holmes, a spring or an alarm or something. Look here, there's no time to lose. He can lag us for the diamond.

MERTON

The hell he can!

COLONEL

But he'll let us slip if we only tell him where the stone is.

MERTON

What, give up the swag! Give up a hundred thousand?

COLONEL

It's one or the other.

MERTON

No way out? You've got the brains, guv'nor, surely you can think a way out of it.

COLONEL

Wait a bit! I've fooled better men than he. Here's the stone in my own secret pocket. It can be out of England tonight, and cut into four pieces in Amsterdam before Saturday. He knows nothing of Van Seddor.

MERTON

I thought Van Seddor was to wait till next week.

COLONEL

Yes, he was. But now he must get the next boat. One or other of us must slip round with the stone to the Excelsior, and tell him.

MERTON

But the false bottom ain't in the hat-box yet!

COLONEL

Well, he must take it as it is and chance it. There's not a moment to lose. As to Holmes, we can fool him easily enough. You see, he won't arrest us if he thinks he can get the stone. We'll put him on the wrong track about it, and before he finds it is the wrong track, the stone will be Amsterdam and we out of the country.

MERTON

That's prime.

COLONEL

You go off now and tell Van Seddor to get a move on him. I'll see this sucker and fill him up with a bogus confession. The stone's in Liverpool - that's what I'll tell him. By the time he finds it isn't, there won't be much of it left, and we'll be on the blue water. *(He looks carefully round him, then draws a small leather box*

*from his pocket and holds it out.) Here is the Crown Diamond.*

HOLMES

*(taking it, as he rises from chair) I thank you!*

COLONEL

*(Staggering back) Curse you, Holmes! (Puts hand in pocket)*

MERTON

To hell with him!

HOLMES

No violence, gentlemen- no violence, I beg of you! I must be very clear to you that your position is an impossible one. The police are waiting below.

COLONEL

You - you devil! How did you get there?

HOLMES

The device is obvious but effective; lights off for a moment and the rest is common sense. It gave me a chance of listening to your racy conversation, which would have been painfully constrained by a knowledge of my presence. No, Colonel, no! I am covering you with a .450 Derringer through the pocket of my dressing gown.  
*(Rings bell.)*

*Enter BILLY*

HOLMES

Send them up, Billy.

*Exit BILLY*

COLONEL

Well, you've got us, damn you!

MERTON

A fair cop! But, I say, what about that  
bloomin' fiddle?

HOLMES

Ah, yes, these modern gramophones -  
wonderful invention, wonderful!

*CURTAIN*