

An excerpt from...

“THE CASE OF THE REALLY BIG DOG OF THE BASKERVILLES”
A JUSTIN THYME MYSTERY
By Bruce Kane

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CHARACTERS:

JUSTIN THYME – Bogart like detective

EFFIE: Thyme’s well built secretary

WELLINGTON: Typical English butler

SIR CHARLES – Well dressed corpse and off stage voice.

PRUDENCE CADBURY – Prim, proper, beautiful.

CHIPS CADBURY – Prudence’s brother – An English twit

DOCTOR FISH – Local doctor and Thyme’s new sidekick

SHEPHERD CADBURY – Stuffy nephew of Sir Charles

FEMALE PATIENT – Very attractive

SETTING:

Baskerville Manor.

Doctor Fish’s Examining Room

Small Hotel Room

Downstage which doubles as a Village Street and an English moor.

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SOUND: BLUESY SAXOPHONE MUSIC

LIGHTS UP

(Thyme enters wearing a trench coat and fedora. He speaks directly to the audience)

THYME: It began like most of my cases... with a four hundred year old curse. I’d just wrapped up the “The Lincoln Murder Case” – an actor did it - when Effie, my incredibly well put together secretary with the limited typing skills, pulsated in with a letter for me.

(Effie pulsates in, hands Thyme the letter and pulsates out. Thyme watches her all the way)

THYME: *(to audience)* The post mark read Baskerville Manor, Hemmershaw on Faversham, Puddingshire... England... Great Britain... United Kingdom. It was from a Sir Charles Baskerville.

(Lights up on Sir Charles, writing a letter)

SIR CHARLES: Dear Mr. Thyme. For nearly four hundred years, all the men in my family have died horrible and disgusting deaths. For reasons I will explain when we meet face to face, I believe I am soon to be the next victim of this dreaded curse. As I find the thought of suffering a horrible and disgusting death both horrible and disgusting, I am calling on your services. Please hurry.. Sir Charles Baskerville. P.S. Use the servant’s entrance.

(Lights down on Sir Charles)

THYME: *(to audience)* I always was a sucker for a guy terrified by a family curse, so I packed my fedora and saxophone accompaniment and headed for nineteenth century England. Me? I'm Justin Thyme. I work for the F.B.I. The Fictional Bureau of Investigation. I handle the toughest, dirtiest cases in English literature. That's right... I'm a fictional detective. It was around midnight when I arrived at Baskerville Manor. Even through the pea soup that passed for fog, I could see the joint made Buckingham Palace look like a Motel Six. I rang the bell.

(MUSIC: CHIMES PLAYING HAIL BRITANNIA)

THYME: A tall man in a black suit answered the door

(Wellington enters)

WELLINGTON: May I help you?

THYME: *(to audience)* I was to learn much later that his name was Wellington... That he was the butler.

WELLINGTON: I'm Wellington. I'm the butler.

THYME: *(to audience)* The butler... A crime hadn't even been committed and I already had my first suspect. I'm here to see Sir Charles.

WELLINGTON: Sir Charles is not at home.

THYME: He was expecting me. The name's Thyme.

WELLINGTON: Oh, yes, Mr. Thyme. You'll find Sir Charles walking on the moor.

THYME: The moor?

WELLINGTON: That's right, sir. The moor.

THYME: *(to audience)* I had no idea what he was talking about. The only moors I knew were Roger, Mandy and Mary Tyler.

WELLINGTON: It's that way sir.

THYME: Kinda odd don't you think?

WELLINGTON: What's that, sir?

THYME: Sir Charles walking around out there at midnight?

WELLINGTON: Go figure.

(Thyme starts to exit offstage)

WELLINGTON: Sir.

THYME: Yeah?

WELLINGTON: The moor is that way.

THYME: Oh *(he changes direction)*

(SOUND: WIND)

THYME: So this was a moor. Bleak, cold, desolate... It reminded me of a dame I was once crazy about... But that's another story.

(SOUND: DOG BAYING)

THYME: As far as I could tell, Sir Charles was nowhere to be found. Maybe he didn't go walking on the moor, after all... Maybe he gave Wellington a phony story and went someplace he didn't want.....

(Thyme trips and falls, either disappearing into the audience or off stage. After a few moments he crawls back on stage and inspects the thing he tripped over)

THYME: *(to audience)* I was right. Sir Charles wasn't walking on the moor. He was face down in it. Sir Charles Baskerville was deader than a church social during Mardi Gras when the drinks are cheap, the food is hot and the dames are both.

(Thyme stands, brushes himself off and crosses back to the Manor)

THYME: I broke the news to Wellington as gently as I could. *(Wellington enters)* Your boss is dead.

WELLINGTON: *(very stiff upper lip)* I'm so sorry to hear that, sir. Would you like a cup of tea?

THYME: *(to audience)* Wellington didn't seem too broken up by the news... It got me to wonderin'. *(to Wellington)* Wellington, you don't seem too broken up by the news.

WELLINGTON: Oh I am sir... Very broken up.

THYME: A guy hears his boss is lying face down in a swamp... he sheds a tear, throws a chair, even asks what happened? But not you.

WELLINGTON: You forget sir... I'm British.

THYME: Oh, yeah... *(to audience)* But that didn't mean I wasn't going to keep an eye on him.

(Lights fade on the Manor. Thyme walks downstage)

THYME: *(to audience)* I still didn't know what croaked the old man. So, the next day I went into town to find the local sawbones.

(Prudence enters. Thyme tips his hat)

PRUDENCE: Well, good morrow tall, dark and cruelly handsome.

THYME: *(to audience)* For a British dame she was alright. Hair like strawberry. Peaches and cream complexion. Eyes like blueberries and for lips... two red delicious apples. I couldn't tell if I was fallin' for her or just low on vitamin C. Good morning. I'm looking for Doctor Fish's office.

PRUDENCE: *(flirtatiously)* It's nothing serious, I hope.

THYME: It's not for me.

PRUDENCE: So glad to hear that. But, I'm afraid I can't be of much help. I've just moved here myself from Worcestshire on Salisbury... Mister...?

THYME: Thyme... Justin Thyme

PRUDENCE: It's nice to meet you Mr. Thyme.

THYME: Likewise... Miss...?

PRUDENCE: Cadbury...

THYME: Miss Cadbury.

PRUDENCE: But, you can call me what my friends calls me.

THYME: And what's that?

PRUDENCE: Miss Cadbury.

THYME: *(to audience)* I was thinking of a lot of others thing I'd like to call her when...

(Chips enter carrying a butterfly net)

CHIPS: Oh there you are Prudence.

THYME: *(to audience)* Some guy with a butterfly net derailed my train of thought.

CHIPS: Isn't this the most magnificent Dryadula phaetusa you've ever seen?

(Holds up a butterfly)

PRUDENCE: Chips... This is Mr. Thyme... Mr. Thyme, this is my... *(hesitates)*

CHIPS: Brother

PRUDENCE: Yes... my brother... Chips Cadbury.

THYME: Nice to meet you.

CHIPS: You wouldn't happen to be a naturalist, would you Mr. Thyme?

THYME: No... I prefer to keep my clothes on in public.

CHIPS: Oh no... A naturalist... A collector of the genus Hamadryas.

PRUDENCE: My brother collects and studies butterflies.

THYME: *(to audience)* That explained the net... And a few other things.

CHIPS: And what do you do, Mr. Thyme?

THYME: I'm a gumshoe... A shamus... a bloodhound...

CHIPS: Excuse me.

THYME: *(to audience)* I could see he had difficulty with the English language... *(to Chips)* I'm a detective.

PRUDENCE: A detective. How absolutely thrilling. Isn't that thrilling Chips? Mr. Thyme is a detective.

CHIPS: *(not thrilled)* Yes... Thrilling.

PRUDENCE: And may I ask what you're detecting, Mr. Thyme?

THYME: *(to audience)* At the moment I was detecting a smile that promised nights of unbridled passion followed by days of unremitting recrimination. It was a cocktail I found irresistible.

(The Play continues...)

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