

“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.

PRUDENCE CADBURY – Prim, proper, beautiful.

CHIPS CADBURY – Prudence’s “brother” – An English wit

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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A JUSTIN THYME MYSTERY
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SOUND: BLUESY SAXOPHONE MUSIC

LIGHTS UP

(Thyme sits on his desk facing the audience)

THYME: It began like most of my cases when Effie, my over developed secretary with the under developed typing skills, pulsated into my office.

(Effie pulsates in)

THYME: *(to audience)* She took a deep breath and told my I had a letter.

EFFIE: *(takes a deep breath)* You got a lettah.

THYME: I waited for her to exhale, rolled my tongue back into the general vicinity of my mouth and asked... *(to Effie)* Where from?

EFFIE: The post mark says Baskerville Manor, Hemmershaw on Faversham, Puddingshire... England... Great Britain... United Kingdom.

THYME: Did you say Baskerville Manor?

EFFIE: Yeah, Baskerville Manor

THYME: That's what I thought you said.

EFFIE: Then why did you make me repeat it?

THYME: Dramatic emphasis.

EFFIE: *(to audience)* I asked Effie to read the letter to me. *(to Effie)* Read me the letter.

EFFIE: Reading ain't part of my job description.

THYME: Consider it a new responsibility.

EFFIE: Okay. But, this better be reflected in my pay check.

THYME: Just read, sweet knees.

EFFIE: (*reads*) 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. (*to Thyme*) What should I tell him?

THYME: (*to audience*) I always was a sucker for a guy terrified by a four hundred year old family curse. (*to Effie*) Hand me my trench coat, apricot toes. (*she does*) Now, my fedora. (*she does*) And one more thing.

EFFIE: What's that?

THYME: Cue my saxophone accompaniment.

(She does. The saxophone begins to play. Thyme and Effie exit)

(Thyme enters)

THYME: 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.

WELLINGTON: Your name, sir.

THYME: Thyme. Justin Thyme. Sir Charles wrote me, asking for my help. I work for the F.B.I.

WELLINGTON: The F.B.I.?

THYME: The Fictional Bureau of Investigation. I handle the nastiest, dirtiest crimes in English literature.

WELLINGTON: Does that mean...?

THYME: That's right. I'm a fictional detective.

WELLINGTON: In that case, 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 over a dead body)

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. *(to Prudence)* 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)*... friend...

CHIPS: Brother

PRUDENCE: *(quickly)* 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.

PRUDENCE: Well, Mr. Thyme?

THYME: Oh... I'm investigating the deadly death of Sir Charles Baskerville.

CHIPS: That's all very interesting Mr. Thyme, but my sister and I must be running along. Come along, Prudence.

THYME: I was just asking your sister here, if she knew where I could find Doctor Fish.

CHIPS: Two doors down.

THYME: Thanks.

PRUDENCE: Perhaps we'll meet again, Mr. Thyme.

THYME: You can count on it, sugar hips.

(Prudence and Chips exit)

(Lights up on Doctor Fish's Office. Thyme enters)

THYME: Doctor Fish?

(Dr. Fish enters)

FISH: Yes, I'm Earl Fish. If you'll just take your shirt off and get up on the table...

THYME: I'm not a patient.

FISH: In that case, you don't have to get on the table.

THYME: *(to audience)* I told him he was needed at Baskerville Manor. *(to Fish)* You're needed as Baskerville Manor. He asked me why?

FISH: Why?

THYME: *(to audience)* I told him Lord Baskerville was dead. *(to Fish)* Lord Baskerville is dead. *(to audience)* He asked me how he died.

FISH: How did he die?

THYME: *(to audience)* I told him I didn't know. *(to Fish)* I don't know. *(to audience)* I told him that's why he was needed. *(to Fish)* That's why you're needed. *(to audience)* He said "Oh."

FISH: Oh.

THYME: *(to Fish)* I told him there was no time to waste. *(to Fish)* There's no time to waste. *(to audience)* We left immediately. It was a long walk. *(They take two steps to the Manor)* Wellington was there to meet us.

WELLINGTON: *(entering)* Doctor Fish... Mr Thyme.

THYME: The Doctor is here to examine the stiff.

WELLINGTON: If you'll follow me through the central hallway, up the main staircase, down the second floor hallway, up the back staircase, past the sitting room, through the smoking room, around the upstairs kitchen, up the auxiliary staircase and into the library where you will find the... "stiff."

(They all exit. For the next minute or so we hear footsteps, doors opening, doors closing, more footsteps, more doors until Thyme, Wellington and Fish reappear)

THYME: *(out of breath)* I gotta join a gym.:

WELLINGTON: *(he points at the body)* There it is, gentlemen. The "stiff."

THYME: Well, what do you think, Doc?

FISH: I'll let you know upon completion of my examination.

(Fish begins his examination)

THYME: *(to audience)* While Fish handled the post mortem I checked out the rogue's gallery of paintings hanging on the walls. Tell me Wellington, who are all these mugs?

WELLINGTON: Former lords of the manor, sir. That's Sir Hugo Baskerville. Also known as Hugo The Hated, Hugo The Despised and Hugo The Just Plain Disgusting. He was the first of the Baskervilles to be found with his throat ripped out.

THYME: Not too popular with the locals?

WELLINGTON: Sir Hugo had taken a young woman who didn't belong to him. Her father wanted her back. Sir Hugo didn't want to give her back. A few nights later they found Sir Hugo dead on the moor. Witnesses said they saw a large creature in the vicinity with eyes that glowed like the devil.

THYME: And everybody bought that?

WELLINGTON: Willingly, sir. Very willingly.

THYME: And who are the rest of these personality challenged characters?

WELLINGTON: This is Sir Aubrey Baskerville, Sir Charles great grandfather. He was found dead on the moor with his throat ripped out. And that's Sir Reginald Baskerville, Sir Charles grandfather. He was found dead on the moor with his throat ripped out. And this is Sir Bentley Baskerville, Sir Charles brother.

THYME: Don't tell me. He was found dead on the moor with his throat ripped out.

MORTIMER: Oh no sir. His throat was quite intact when he died. It was the loss of another body part that resulted in Sir Bentley's demise. He was shot "in flagrante" by a jealous husband... with excellent aim, I might add.

THYME: How about that one there? The one who looks like he was constipated from birth.

MORTIMER: That's Sir Headley Wadsworth Featherengill Baskerville, Sir Charles' father.

THYME: Shot in the flagrante?

BARRYMORE: Throat ripped out.

FISH: My diagnosis is complete, Mr. Thyme.

THYME: Great... What can you tell me?

FISH: After carefully examining Sir Charles, I believe I can say without fear of contradiction that...

THYME: Yeah, Doc. What is it?

FISH: Sir Charles is dead.

THYME: We know that Doc. We need to know how.

FISH: Look closely at Sir Charles's body.

THYME: Do I have too?

FISH: Tell me what you see?

THYME: A dead guy. A very old, very dead guy.

FISH: Do you see any wounds?

THYME: No... Not one. What does that mean?

FISH: It means that at the very moment Sir Charles died, he was in the pink of health

THYME: I'm sure he'd find that very reassuring... if he wasn't so dead. What killed him?

FISH: I'm afraid... it was...

THYME: Yeah, doc? It was...

FISH: I'm afraid... it was fear.

THYME: Fear?

FISH: I'm afraid so.

THYME: What makes you think fear killed Sir Charles?

FISH: Look at his face. That horrible, disfigured expression frozen in place for all eternity.

THYME: So what you're saying is... Sir Charles wasn't always that ugly.

FISH: That's correct.

THYME: Then, maybe you're right Doc. Maybe you're both right.

WELLINGTON: I beg your pardon, sir.

THYME: Sir Charles wrote me that he was afraid the curse of the Baskervilles was catching up with him. Maybe he saw something on the moor. Something so horrible, it scared him to death. When I found his body it was surrounded by the prints of a dog. A big dog.... A very big dog. If I'm right, that pooch had to be the size of a Buick.

(Thyme walks downstage. The lights fade on the Manor. Wellington and Fish exit)

THYME: *(to audience)* But that still left me with three questions. Why did Sir Charles go out on the moor at midnight? Why didn't the creature rip his throat out? And what would it be like to share one night of passion with the delectable Miss Cadbury followed by unending days of guilt and remorse? I couldn't deduce the answer to the second question until I deduced the answer to the first question. As for Miss Cadbury, I'd deduce her later.

(Thyme crosses to the Hotel Room. Prudence enters)

PRUDENCE: I don't know what came over me, Thyme. I should never have agreed to this seedy assignation in this seedy room in this seedy hotel. It's all so... seedy.

THYME: *(to audience)* We hadn't even started and the dame was already full of recriminations. She was everything I expected and more.

PRUDENCE: What was I thinking? I must be mad.

THYME: Remember, this was your idea, candy cakes.

PRUDENCE: But this is the last time. You must agree never to tempt me again with your broad masculine shoulders, your strong masculine hands or your powerful male masculine masculinity.

THYME: I'll do what I can, cumquat cheeks, but I ain't makin' no promises.

PRUDENCE: Oh Thyme. What will I do? What will I do?

THYME: You'll suffer like every other dame I've ever known.

(Thyme takes Prudence in his arms.)

(BLACKOUT)

THYME'S VOICE: Two minutes later Prudence was on a trip to the moon on gossamer wings and I was slipping out the back door and into a dark alley. Before I knew what hit me... *(SOUND OF THYME BEING HIT OVER THE BACK OF THE HEAD)*... it hit me. I went down like a sack of potatoes. It felt like Barry Bonds was goin' for the home run record on the back of my head. Fortunately for me, Barry was off the juice and could only foul me off into the left field bleachers.

LIGHTS BACK UP ON DOCTOR FISH'S OFFICE

(Thyme is lying on a table, out cold. Fish is trying to revive him)

FISH: Mr. Thyme... Mr. Thyme.

THYME: *(coming to)* What happened?

FISH: It seems someone mistook your head for a cricket ball, sir Bit of a sticky wicket, that.

THYME: Ya think so?

FISH: You could have been killed.

THYME: Not a chance. *(Thyme sits up)* I'm a lot more thick headed than people realize,

FISH: This was no accident. Do you have any idea why someone would want to bash your head in?

THYME: My guess is that someone was sending me a message to take the next train outta town.

WELLINGTON: How can you be sure?

THYME: He left this note in my pocket. *(removes note)*

FISH: *(reading)* Take the next train out of town. Your assumption seems to be correct, Mr. Thyme.

THYME: Say Doc... I wonder if you could do me a favor...

(Lights down on Examining Room... Lights up on the Manor)

(Wellington enters)

WELLINGTON: Good morning, Mr. Thyme. May I fetch you some breakfast?

(Thyme crosses to Wellington, rubbing his head)

THYME: Just a cuppa joe if you got it.

WELLINGTON: Joe sir?

THYME: Java, jamocha, mud, ink... Didn't anybody around here speak English? Coffee.

WELLINGTON: Yes sir.

THYME: One more thing Wellington.

WELLINGTON: Yes, sir?

THYME: Now that Sir Charles is about to take up residence in the bone yard, who's next in line to get his throat ripped out?

(Shepherd Baskerville enters carrying a suitcase)

BASKERVILLE: That would be me.

THYME: And who are you?

BASKERVILLE: Shepherd Baskerville at your service. Sir Charles was my uncle. And just who might you be?

THYME: Justin Thyme, Fictional Detective. This is Wellington, your late uncle's butler.

WELLINGTON: At your service, sir.

THYME: Where were you two nights ago around midnight?

BASKERVILLE: On a boat. As soon as I heard of my uncle's death I booked passage and came directly here.

THYME: Boat? Really? From where?

BASKERVILLE: Sydney, Australia.

THYME: Australia?.

BASKERVILLE: It was a fast boat.

THYME: *(to audience)* Okay, so he had an alibi. But that didn't mean I wasn't going to keep an eye on him.

(Prudence enters)

PRUDENCE: Oh, Shepherd darling, this is such a lovely... Oh Mr. Thyme. What are you doing here?

THYME: I might ask you the same question... Miss Cadbury.

BASKERVILLE: You know Mr. Thyme, Prudence?

PRUDENCE: We met in town. He was seeking directions.

BASKERVILLE: And did you tell him where to go?

THYME: And how to get there.

BASKERVILLE: As you've already met Mr. Thyme, may I introduce Wellington, my late uncle's butler. This is Miss Cadbury, my fiancée.

THYME: Fiancee?

PRUDENCE: Yes... Shepherd and I are going to be married.

THYME: Really? Married? *(to audience)* Funny I didn't notice a ring on her finger when we checked into the Hotel Seedy. And believe me, the first thing I do when I check into a seedy hotel with a dame is check out her ring finger. Well, maybe not the first thing, but it's right up there in the top ten.

BASKERVILLE: Prudence and I met at the train station. I knew the first time I saw her take a deep breath she was the woman I was going to spend the rest of my life with.

THYME: *(to audience)* I knew what he was talkin' about. I like to think of myself as somewhat of a connoisseur of dames who inhale and this Prudence doll was right up there with the best of them.

BASKERVILLE: I was going to show Prudence around the Manor. Wellington, perhaps you'll act as our guide, if you wouldn't mind?

WELLINGTON: It would be my pleasure, sir.

(Wellington, Baskerville and Prudence begin to exit. Wellington points a few things out and then exits with young Baskerville, leaving Prudence alone to rummage through some books)

(Thyme crosses the stage and comes up behind her.)

THYME: So you're getting married?

PRUDENCE: Mr. Thyme. You startled me.

THYME: Sorry.

PRUDENCE: As I am soon to be the mistress of the house, I thought I should become familiar with the manor and what better place to start than the library? What are you doing here?

THYME: Let's just say I came in to check something out and it wasn't a book.

PRUDENCE: We can't be seen talking like this, Mr. Thyme. What will Shepherd think?

THYME: Shepherd's busy counting up all the geetus he just inherited. But you knew that when you just happened to take a deep breath as he was getting off the train.

PRUDENCE: It's a musty train station. I was having trouble catching my breath.

THYME: The only one having trouble catching his breath was Baskerville.

PRUDENCE: Yes, yes, I admit it. I went there to meet him. You don't know what's it like trying to keep up appearances on the earnings of a butterfly collector.

THYME: *(to audience)* I couldn't blame Prudence for reachin' for the brass ring. At least one of us was getting' somewhere. In every case there's a moment when you're ready to toss in the towel, give up the ghost... Say forget it and take a job working for some low life private dick tailin' husbands cheatin' on their wives with dames they wouldn't be caught dead with in a public place filled with desperate people workin' dead end jobs for lousy bosses who'll dump 'em at the first sign of an economic downturn. It's always at that moment that an important clue drops into your lap.

(Wellington enters)

WELLINGTON: I'm sorry to interrupt sir. I wonder if I might have a word with you, Mr. Thyme.

THYME: Sure...

WELLINGTON: If you'll excuse us Miss Cadbury.

(Thyme and Wellington walk downstage. Prudence exits)

THYME: What is it, Wellington?

WELLINGTON: While straightening up Sir Charles's study I came across this.

THYME: It looks like a letter.

WELLINGTON: More of a note actually... A letter would have a formal beginning or salutation. And, of course, it would be written on letterhead stationary made of the finest Indian linen...

THYME: *(annoyed)* Just read the note.

WELLINGTON: *(clears throat)* Dear Sweetie Cakes... Meet me on the moor at midnight. "Boopsie"

THYME: It never fails.

WELLINGTON: What never fails, sir?

THYME: When an English lord takes a walk on a moor
And he's found lyin' face down in the dirt.
Call it dumb ...call it clever.
But, you can give odds forever
That the lord was only doin' it for some skirt.

WELLINGTON: "Skirt" sir?

THYME: Yeah... A dame, a Betty, a babe, a broad, a cupcake, a cutie, a,,,

WELLINGTON: Are you referring to the weaker sex, Mr. Thyme?

THYME: The weaker sex? *(to audience)* Obviously this guy had never been married. *(to Wellington)* Any idea who this Boopsie is?

WELLINGTON: Not to tell tales out of school, sir.

THYME: School's out. I won't rat you out to the headmaster. Spill.

WELLINGTON: Well... Sir Charles did show a preference for ... how should I put it? Ladies of easy virtue.

THYME: Easy virtue?

WELLINGTON: Yes, sir... Sluts, strumpets, tarts, tramps, wenches, hussies.

THYME: Why didn't you say so in the first place?

WELLINGTON: I believe I did, sir.

THYME: *(to audience)* So, Sir Charles liked a little crumpet with his Earl Grey. And now I had another question I couldn't answer. Who was "Boopsie?" The questions were piling up like... questions... in a great big pile. I needed to talk to the Doc.

(Thyme crosses to Fish's office, where he is examining a woman wearing a long dress, a chemise but no blouse.)

FISH: Just take two of these before breakfast. *(gives her a vial of pills)*

WOMAN: Thank you, Doctor.

FISH: Quite alright.

WOMAN: May I put on my shirt now?

FISH: By all means.

(She puts on shirt and exits)

THYME: What's her problem?

FISH: Sprained ankle. What can I do for you Thyme?

THYME: Did you find out anything?

FISH: Quite a bit, actually... Your suspicions were correct.

THYME: Good work, Doc.

FISH: Elementary, my dear Thyme... Elementary.

(Thyme crosses back to the Manor. Wellington and Baskerville enter.)

THYME: Everything set, Wellington?

WELLINGTON: Everything is quite ready, sir.

BASKERVILLE: I don't understand why we're having a dinner party on the eve of my dear uncle's funeral, Mr. Thyme. It's very unseemly.

THYME: You wanna know who iced your uncle, don't ya?

BASKERVILLE: If anyone did "ice" him as you so chillingly put it.

THYME: Someone "iced" him alright and it's going to be someone around that table.

BASKERVILLE: I hope you're not including me on your list of brigands.

THYME: What makes you think I'm not?

BASKERVILLE: You can't be serious, Thyme...

THYME: You had the most to gain from Sir Charles getting his ticket punched.

BASKERVILLE: If anyone murdered Sir Charles, it had to be Wellington.

THYME: How do you figure that?

BASKERVILLE: Well, he is the butler. No offense Wellington.

WELLINGTON: None taken, sir.

(SOUND: DOOR CHIMES PLAYING "HAIL BRITANIA")

BASKERVILLE: What was that?

WELLINGTON: "Hail Britannia," sir.

THYME: Our first guest has arrived. And right on time.

WELLINGTON: I'll get the door, sir.

(Wellington shuffles across the stage very slowly and very deliberately. Fish enters)

FISH: Good evening, Wellington. I believe I'm expected.

WELLINGTON: If you will follow me Doctor.

(Wellington shuffles back very slowly and very deliberately. Fish follows, annoyed that it's taking so long.)

WELLINGTON: Doctor Fish gentlemen.

FISH: Good evening, Thyme... Mr. Baskerville... Your dinner invitation came as somewhat of a surprise. Not that I'm not honored.

BASKERVILLE: Don't thank me. It was Thyme's idea. He thinks one of us killed my uncle.

FISH: That doesn't include me, of course.

THYME: What makes you think it doesn't?

FISH: If anyone murdered Sir Charles, it would be Wellington.

THYME: Why do you say that?

FISH: Well, he is the butler. No offense Wellington.

WELLINGTON: None taken, sir. Shall I wait for Miss Cadbury and her brother to arrive before serving drinks, sir?

BASKERVILLE: I think that would be best, Wellington.

FISH: Miss Cadbury?

BASKERVILLE: My fiancée.

FISH: Congratulations.

BASKERVILLE: Thank you... I do wonder what's keeping Prudence.

(SOUND: FRANTIC POUNDING ON FRONT DOOR)

BASKERVILLE: *(alarmed)* What is that?

WELLINGTON: I believe someone is pounding frantically on the front door. Would you like me to get that, sir?

BASKERVILLE: By all means.

(Wellington shuffles across the stage very slowly and very deliberately. The frantic pounding continues. Prudence enters... Her hair is mess and her dress has been torn)

PRUDENCE: Oh, Wellington... It was awful... Just awful.

WELLINGTON: If you say so, ma'am... Please follow me.

(Wellington shuffles back very slowly with Prudence right behind hoping he'll speed up.)

WELLINGTON: Miss Cadbury, sir. She's been attacked.

THYME: Attacked? By who?

WELLINGTON: *(correcting him)* By whom?

THYME: Why are you asking me?

WELLINGTON: I'm not sir.

THYME: You just said "By whom?"

WELLINGTON: Correct sir.

THYME: Either *(pronounced ee-ther)* you know who roughed up the doll or you don't.

WELLINGTON: *(still correcting)* Either *(pronounced eye-ther)* I know who roughed up the doll or I don't.

THYME: Yeah, that's what I just said. So, who attacked the tomato? *(pronounced to-may-tah)*

WELLINGTON: *(correcting still)* Who attacked the tomato? *(pronounced to-mah-toh)*

THYME: Tell ya' what, Wellington.

WELLINGTON: What's that, sir?

THYME: Let's call the whole thing off.

BASKERVILLE: Prudence... Are you alright?

PRUDENCE: (*distraught*) It was horrible, Shepherd... Horrible.

FISH: Stand back... Give her some room.

THYME: (*to audience*) Prudence had obviously been roughed up. The buttons on the front of her dress had been torn away. Her hair had fallen wildly over her exposed shoulders. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were ablaze with fear. She looked incredible.

BASKERVILLE: What happened, my precious?

PRUDENCE: Chips and I were coming across the moor to join you for dinner... (*charmingly*) And such a kind invitation it was too...

BASKERVILLE: (*politely*) Think nothing of it.

PRUDENCE: It was so nice of you to invite Chips and me. We are ever so...

THYME: (*impatiently*) Hey, vanilla thighs. What happened?

PRUDENCE: Oh yes... This thing ...came out of nowhere...

BASKERVILLE: What thing?

PRUDENCE: It was big and ugly and its eyes glowed like the devil.

THYME: Where's your brother, now?

PRUDENCE: (*dramatically*) He's...out there.

THYME: On the moor?

PRUDENCE: Oh Shepherd you must save him.

THYME: We'll find your brother, raspberry ears.

PRUDENCE: Oh thank you, Mr. Thyme.

THYME: Or what's left of him. Baskerville... Fish... Come with me.

BASKERVILLE: (*nervously*) Come with you?

THYME: Yeah... You got a problem with that, Cyril?

BASKERVILLE: I was just thinking that it might be best if I stayed here to look after Prudence? After all, she's been through a terrible ordeal

THYME: You're not afraid of some four hundred year old curse, are you Percy?

PRUDENCE: Of course he's not, Mr. Thyme. There is no one braver or more steadfast in the face of certain danger than my Shepherd. Shepherd is my lord... He leads me beside the still waters. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

BASKERVILLE: Prudence, please... We agreed we wouldn't talk about that.

PRUDENCE: Even though he walks through the valley of death...

BASKERVILLE: Valley of death???

PRUDENCE: See Mr. Thyme. You have no reason to doubt Shepherd's courage.

THYME: Let's go... Wellington, keep an eye on Miss Cadbury.

WELLINGTON: It will be my pleasure, sir.

(Thyme, Baskerville and Fish exit onto the moor)

(SOUND: WIND)

(SOUND: DOG HOWLING)

FISH: Still no sign of Mr. Cadbury, Thyme. Perhaps the creature carried him off

BASKERVILLE: You are, no doubt, correct, Doctor. Shall we return to the Manor. I'm sure dinner is still waiting and this search has given me an absolutely ripping appetite.

THYME: We'll split up.

BASKERVILLE: *(nervously)* Split up???

THYME: Doc, you take that trail... I'll go this way.

BASKERVILLE: What about me?

(SOUND: DOG HOWLING)

THYME: Hear that dog howling?

BASKERVILLE: Y...y...yes.

THYME: You go that way.

BASKERVILLE: Th... th... that way?

THYME: Just think how grateful Prudence will be when you tell her you snatched her brother from the jaws of death.

BASKERVILLE: *(more nervously)* Jaws of death???

THYME: If you still have your throat in an hour, meet me back here.

(Thyme and Fish exit in one direction. Baskerville goes in the other direction. After a few moments Thyme returns)

THYME: *(to audience)* An hour later and there was still no sign of Cadbury. I was about to give up and turn back when....

(SOUND: BASKERVILLE SCREAMING FOR HELP)

THYME: A terrified scream. Either Baskerville was being attacked by the beast or he'd just seen his own shadow.

(Fish enters)

FISH: Thyme over here. The screams were coming from this direction.

THYME: Let's go, Doc. *(calling out)* Hang on Neville, we're coming.

FISH: How thrilling, Thyme... The game's afoot.

THYME: What game? What foot?

(SOUND: ANIMAL NOISES)

BASKERVILLE: (O.S.) Help... Help me..... Help....

FISH: Look there, Thyme... It's Baskerville... Something's got him.

(SOUND: ANIMAL NOISES AND CRIES OF HELP CONTINUE UNDER THE FOLLOWING)

FISH: Those eyes, Thyme... They glow like the very devil, himself. It can only be one thing. *(with great ominous portent)* The really big dog of the Baskervilles.

(SOUND: ANIMAL NOISES AND CRIES OF HELP!)

THYME: Come on Doc.

(Thyme and Fish run off stage. Baskerville staggers in. Thyme and Fish return)

FISH: Thyme... The beast... It's getting away.

THYME: Doc... You look after Baskerville. I'm going after that flea motel.

FISH: Be careful, Thyme... Be careful.

(Fish leads Baskerville off. Thyme goes after the beast which we can still hear baying and growling. A few moments he later returns)

THYME: *(to audience)* One minute the beast was in front of me...

(The growling stops)

THYME: ...And the next he was gone. The moor became eerily silent with only the sound of the wind to keep me company. The moon suddenly moved behind the clouds. Or, the clouds moved in front of the moon. I couldn't be sure, but either way, I could hardly see my hand in front of my face when...*(Thyme exits)*

(SOUND: ANIMAL NOISES AGAIN)

THYME: (O.S.) Then without warning the beast was on me.

(SOUNDS: THYME STRUGGLES WITH THE BEAST)

THYME: (O.S.) I called on every ounce of strength I could muster to fight him off. But he was on me too quickly. His eyes were bright red and glowing like the devil himself.

(Fish runs in)

FISH: Thyme... Are you alright?

THYME: (O.S.) Over here, Doc.

(Fish runs offstage)

THYME: I think I've got him Doc. Okay... Now rip his head off.

FISH: What?

THYME: Rip his head off.

FISH: If you insist.

(SOUND: A LOUD RIPPING SOUND)

(Lights up on the Manor where Prudence waits nervously. Wellington brings her a cup of tea)

(SOUND: CHIMES)

PRUDENCE: Oh, dear me. What's that?

WELLINGTON: "Hail, Britannia."

(Wellington shuffles very slowly across the stage)

(Thyme enters)

THYME: What took you so long? My suit almost went outta style.

(Baskerville enters. Prudence crosses to him)

PRUDENCE: Oh Shepherd. *(a little surprised)* You're alive.

THYME: We're all alive, lemon lips. Me, your boyfriend, Fish and Chips.

(Fish enters holding Chips dressed in a dog suit)

PRUDENCE: Chips. What happened to you? Why are you tied up? And why are you dressed like the dog in Peter Pan?

BASKERVILLE: I don't know how to tell you this, my beloved... But your brother tried to kill me.

CADBURY: It was a joke... An attempt at humor that went astray... Can't you gentlemen recognize a merry prank when you see one?

THYME: Put a sock in it Sparky or I'll slap you around just for the fun of it.

PRUDENCE: Are you going to let him talk to your future brother in law that way, Shepherd?

THYME: *(to Prudence)* I knew something wasn't kosher, the first time we met, persimmon knees. But I couldn't put my finger on it. And then it came to me... You told me you were from Worcestershire on Salisbury.

PRUDENCE: I am from .Worcestershire on Salisbury

THYME: Not quite... Y'see apple palms, people from Worcestershire on Salisbury have rounded "r's." Your "r's" are flat.

PRUDENCE: *(Cockney accent)* My arse is as round as they come.

BASKERVILLE: *(shocked)* Prudence.

THYME: It was Prudence... or should I call you what your friend's call you... Boopsie..

BASKERVILLE: Boopsie?

THYME: She was the bait. She was brought in to stoke Sir Charles's fire. Put a little lead in his pencil.

PRUDENCE: *(cultured voice)* It's not true. He's making it all up. He wants me all to himself. Well, you can't have me Thyme... I belong to Shepherd. You'll never deduce me again.

BASKERVILLE: Again??? How many deductions did he take?

THYME: *(to Prudence)* You lured Sir Charles out on to the moor, elderberry ears, so Chips could dress up like Rin Tin Tin and scare the... life... right out of him. Just like you lured me to the Hotel Seedy so Chips could play whack a mole on my noggin.

BASKERVILLE: I don't understand what's going on.

THYME: Well, there's a late breaking bulletin. Chips here, isn't who he say he is, are you, Chips? The next time you claim to be a naturalist, Cadbury, don't go running around with a butterfly net made of ten gauge mesh. Everyone worth their salt knows ten gauge is strictly for beginners... The real pros use twenty gauge, at least.

BASKERVILLE: I didn't know that.

THYME: Like I said... Everyone worth their salt. Secondly ... Remember the butterfly you made a point of showing me?

(Tape Playback) CHIPS: Isn't this the most magnificent *Dryadula phaetusa* you've ever seen?

FISH: What the hell was that?

THYME: A flashback. Y'see, Cadbury, that was no *dryadula phaetusa*. It was a *likimenitis archippus*. Another amateur mistake. But the one that nailed the coffin shut was when I asked you for directions to Doc Fish's. Your sister didn't know it was two doors away. But you didn't hesitate. She was new to the area, but you weren't.

CHIPS: (*tough, lower class accent*) You'll never pin this on me, Sherlock.

BASKERVILLE: For what reason would Cadbury do these awful things?

THYME: He thinks he's heir to the Baskerville fortune, don'tcha Cadbury?

BASKERVILLE: But that's absurd. For that he'd have to be a blood relative.

THYME: He is.

BASKERVILLE: Poppycock.

THYME: That's one way to describe it. Y'see, our boy Chips was born nine months to the day your father took six shots in his flagrante when he was caught by a jealous husband... how should I put it... puttin' it to his wife.

BASKERVILLE: Mmmm... That would explain why father is the only one smiling in his portrait.

THYME. That would put Chips here second in line to the Baskerville fortune, right behind you Clive. When you showed up, Cadbury knew he had to get rid of you, too. So, I decided to use that to flush him out. He staged the fake attack on Boopsie to lure you out onto the moor where he could rip your throat out.

BASKERVILLE: Rip my throat out???

THYME: That's right. Rip your throat out.

BASKERVILLE: And you left me out on that moor knowing he was waiting to rip my throat out?

THYME: I wasn't completely sure. But it was the only way I could find out.

BASKERVILLE: But he could have ripped my throat out.

THYME: It's a chance I was willing to take.

CADBURY: It was all her idea. Once a gutter snipe, always a gutter snipe.

PRUDENCE: Gutter snipe? Gutter snipe? I'll get you, I will. (*sounding like Julie Andrews in "My Fair Lady"*) Just you wait (*pronounced "white"*) Chips Cadbury.. Just you wait. You'll be sorry, but your tears'll be to late!
You'll be broke, and I'll have money;
Will I help you? Don't be funny!

THYME: Knock off the tin-tinnabulation, tangerine toes. You'll have plenty of time for that in the hoosegow.

PRUDENCE: I never wanted to be part of this. You must believe me. I was perfectly happy workin' at Madame Claire's International House of Pain and Pancakes. Then he told me I could be rich. All I had to do was learn to speak like a lady. "The rhine in Spine says minely in the pline." He said when he was done with me I could pass anywhere for a cultivated lady from Worcestershire on Salisbury.

THYME: Except for your flat "r's"

PRUDENCE: (*cockney accent*) I told you to keep my arse outta this. I didn't know we was gonna scare Sir Charles. He told me all I had to do was be nice to him. Then after Sir Charles died he told me not to say anything or he'd kill me.

BASKERVILLE: Cadbury, you cad.

CHIPS: She's makin' it up. I never told her any of that.

THYME: Of course, you didn't. You're not smart enough.

CHIPS: You tell 'em copper.

THYME: But someone did tell her.... Someone who knew your history, Cadbury. Someone who convinced you that the Baskerville fortune could be yours. Someone who knew of Sir Charles's' fear of the really big dog of the Baskervilles. Someone who told Shepherd that his uncle was dead so he'd return to get his throat ripped out.

BASKERVILLE: Must you keep saying that?

THYME: Someone who was gonna arrange for Cadbury here to be found on the moor with his throat ripped out.

BASKERVILLE: There, you said it again.

THYME: Someone who knew that if there were no more Baskervilles to claim the estate then everything went to... him. Isn't that true, Wellington?

WELLINGTON: That's quite right, sir. But unfortunately, you will never live to repeat this to anyone.

THYME: And what makes you think I won't?

WELLINGTON: This Pippin Thirty Seven pointed at your head, sir.

(Wellington produces a small gun)

BASKERVILLE: Thyme, watch out... He's got a gun.

THYME: Thanks for the news flash, Cyril.

BASKERVILLE: Quite alright.

THYME: You don't think I'd come unprepared, do ya Wellington? You might want to turn around. But if I were you I'd do it very slowly. That Winkle Fifty Two Doctor Fish has pointed at your flagranto has a hair trigger. We wouldn't want it to go off accidentally, would we Doc?

FISH: Most correct, Mr. Thyme.

BASKERVILLE: Excuse me, Mr. Thyme. I don't mean to tell you your business, but Doctor Fish is, in fact, only pointing his finger at Wellington's flagranto. I hardly think there is any danger of it going off accidentally, or otherwise.

WELLINGTON: Thank you, sir.

BASKERVILLE: Just stating the obvious.

THYME: *(to audience)* If the local village ever needed a resident idiot, it wouldn't have far to look. *(to Fish)* It seems like he's on to us Doc. I guess it's time for Plan B.

WELLINGTON: Plan B, Mr. Thyme?

THYME: Yeah, Plan B. Doctor Fish knocks the roscoe out of your hand.

FISH: Roscoe?

THYME: Yeah... Roscoe...Cannon... Blaster... Heater... Rod...

FISH: Rod?

THYME: Doesn't anyone here speak English. Rod... Gun...

FISH: Ah yes. Plan B.

(Fish knocks the gun out of Wellington's hand)

BASKERVILLE: I believe there is one small flaw in your Plan B, Mr. Thyme.

THYME: Of yeah? What's that?

BASKERVILLE: You have no cricket bat with which to hit Wellington upside the head.

WELLINGTON: Thank you for pointing that out sir.

BASKERVILLE: Think nothing of it, Wellington.

WELLINGTON: In view of the flaw in your plan, Mr. Thyme, it seems I have only one alternative.

THYME: What's that?

WELLINGTON: Run like hell.

(Wellington runs across the stage and exits)

THYME: Doc, you come with me. Baskerville, keep an eye on these two.

(Lights down on the Manor. Thyme and Fish race across the stage and exit. Wellington runs back across the stage and exits. Thyme and Fish race across the stage and exit. The chase continues as the players run back and forth across the stage until...)

THYME: *(out of breath)* Amazing?

FISH: That he's gotten away?

THYME: That he could run that fast.

(Lights down)

(Lights back up on Thyme's Office where we find the detective bringing Effie up to date.)

EFFIE: So... what you're telling me is that the butler actually did it.

THYME: Seems that way.

EFFIE: Seems a little cliché, if you ask me. Yea Well, did you ever find Wellington?

THYME: We searched everywhere. Not a trace.

EFFIE: So, he got clean away.

THYME: Not exactly.

EFFIE: What do you mean “not exactly.”

THYME: A couple of weeks later a shepherd found a body. Claims he saw a dog the size of a Buick nearby baying at the moon.

EFFIE: The body?

THYME: Wellington. At least what was left of him..

(phone rings, Effie answers.)

EFFIE: Justin Thyme’s office. Effie his incredibly available secretary speaking. Hold on. I’ll check. *(to Thyme)* You know anybody in some place called Peppermint Bay?

THYME: Ain’t that the place where bons bon play on the sunny beach?

EFFIE: How should I know? Caller wants you to look into a suspicious death.

THYME: Whose?

EFFIE: Some character called Humpty Dumpty.

THYME: Did you say Humpty Dumpty?

EFFIE: Yeah. Humpty Dumpty.

THYME: That’s what I thought you said.

EFFIE: Then why’d you make me..? Oh right. Dramatic emphasis. You know this Dumpty character?

THYME: Yeah... He’s an egg.

EFFIE: As in cheaper by the dozen?

THYME: Yeah. An “egg” egg.

EFFIE: First a four hundred year old curse. Then at a dog the size of a Buick. Now the suspicious death of an “egg?”

THYME: Hey, I don’t write these stories, sweetheart. I just investigate them. Do me a favor cumquat toes.

EFFIE: What’s that?

THYME: Book me a one way ticket on the Good Ship Lollipop. Destination Peppermint Bay.

EFFIE: Anything else.

THYME: Yeah. Cue my exit music

(She cues the saxophone which begins to play)

(They exit)

CURTAIN