

THE ILLUSTRIOUS CLIENT

by **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**

Adapted by Robert E. Robinson

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Sir James Damery	Illustrious Intermediary
Mr. Sherlock Holmes	Unofficial Consulting Detective
Baron Adelbert Gruner	Murdering Libertine
Mr. John Shinwell	Valet de Chambre
Miss Kitty Winter	Wronged Fallen Woman
Miss Violet de Merville	General's Daughter
Mr. Porky Johnson	Miscreant
Dr. Hill Barton	Ceramics Collector

PLACE: ENGLAND

TIME: VICTORIAN

SCENE 1

Morning in 221-B Baker Street. Sherlock HOLMES and Sir James DAMERY, standing.

DAMERY: I had rather expected, Mr. Holmes, that Dr. Watson would be here.

HOLMES: Alas, he has deserted me for a wife -- the only selfish action of which he has been capable. And indeed, Sir James Damery, your note indicated that the matter was a highly sensitive one.

DAMERY: It is that. Still, his collaboration may be very necessary, for we are dealing with a man to whom violence is familiar, and who will literally stick at nothing.

HOLMES: If and when I need him, Dr. Watson will be available. Please tell me of this formidable adversary.

DAMERY: I should say that there is no more dangerous man in Europe.

HOLMES: I have had several opponents to whom that flattering term has been applied. If your man is more dangerous than the late Professor Moriarty or the living Colonel Moran, then he is indeed worth meeting. May I ask his name?

DAMERY: Have you ever heard of -- Baron Gruner?

HOLMES: [*Rubbing his hands together*] Baron Adelbert Gruner? The Austrian murderer?

DAMERY: [*Throwing up kid-gloved hands and laughing*] There is no getting past you, Mr. Holmes! Wonderful! So you have already sized him up as a murderer?

HOLMES: It is my business to follow the details of Continental crime. Who could possibly have read what happened at Prague and still have doubts as to the man's guilt? And I am as sure that he killed his wife in that so called "accident" at the Splügen Pass as if I had seen him do it. I am aware, also, that he has come to England and have had no doubt that he would someday provide me with some work to do. Well, just what has the Baron been up to?

DAMERY: It is a terrible thing, Mr. Holmes, to see a dreadful event, an atrocious situation, preparing itself before your eyes, to understand clearly where it will lead and yet be utterly unable to avert it. Can a human being be placed in a more trying position?

HOLMES: Perhaps not.

DAMERY: Then you will sympathize with the client in whose interest I am acting.

HOLMES: You are here as an intermediary?

DAMERY: I am.

HOLMES: Who, then, is the principal?

DAMERY: Ah, I must beg you not to press that question.

HOLMES: I am sorry. It is usual to have mystery at one end of my cases, but to have it at both ends is excessive. I fear, Sir James, I must decline to act.

DAMERY: You hardly realize the effect of your decision, Mr. Holmes. I am perfectly certain that you would be proud to take over the case if I could give you all the facts, and yet a promise forbids me from doing so. May I, at least, lay what I can before you?

HOLMES: Certainly, so long as it is understood that I commit myself to nothing.

DAMERY: That is understood. In the first place, you have no doubt heard of General de Merville?

HOLMES: The Tiger of the Khyber.

DAMERY: Exactly. It is his daughter, Violet de Merville -- young, rich, beautiful, a wonder-woman in every way. It is she whom we are endeavoring to rescue from the clutches of the fiend.

HOLMES: So Baron Gruner has some hold over her?

DAMERY: The strongest of all holds where a woman is concerned -- the hold of love. The fellow is, as you may have heard, extraordinarily handsome, with a most fascinating manner, a gentle voice, and all the air of mystery and romance which means so much to a woman. It is said that he has the entire sex at his mercy and has made more than ample use of that fact.

HOLMES: And Miss Violet de Merville?

DAMERY: Mr. Holmes, the villain has affixed himself to the lady. He has absolutely won her heart. To say that she loves him hardly expresses it. She dotes on him - she is obsessed by him. To sum up, she proposes to marry him next month. She is of age, and has a will of iron. Yet something must be done to prevent her.

HOLMES: Dear me! Surely you have let out the name of your client. He is no doubt General de Merville.

DAMERY: I could deceive you by saying so, Mr. Holmes, but I shall not. The general is a broken wretch. That strong soldier, so steadfast at the gateway to Afghanistan, has been reduced by this incident to a weak, doddering old man, utterly incapable of contending with a brilliant, forceful rascal like this Austrian.

HOLMES: Then your client is -- ?

DAMERY: An old friend, highly placed, *very* highly, I say. He has taken a -- paternal interest in this girl. He cannot see this tragedy consummated without some effort to stop it.

HOLMES: I see.

DAMERY: I have no doubt, Mr. Holmes, that with your great powers you could trace my client back through me, but I must ask you not to break in on his incognito.

HOLMES: [*Smiling*] You may assure his Majest -- that is, you may assure your client that I shall make no further efforts to identify him.

DAMERY: [*Smiling*] I suspect that none would be necessary. However, may I assume that you will take the case?

HOLMES: Apart from what you have told me, is there any further information about the Baron?

DAMERY: He has expensive tastes. He is a horse fancier. For a time he played polo at Hurlingham, but then had to leave when this Prague affair got nosed around. There is also a considerable artistic side to his nature. He collects books and pictures. Oh yes, and ceramics. He is, I believe a recognized authority on Chinese pottery, and indeed has written a highly-regarded book upon the subject.

HOLMES: A complex mind -- every great criminal has one. My old friend, Charlie Peace, was a violin virtuoso. Wainwright was no mean artist. I could quote many more. Well, Sir James, you will inform your client that I am turning my mind upon Baron Gruner. I have some sources of my own, and I dare say we shall find some means of opening the matter up.

CURTAIN

SCENE 2

That afternoon. Elegant sitting room. Baron Adelbert GRUNER is seated, reading a book. Enter SHINWELL, with a calling card on a small tray.

SHINWELL: [*Offering tray to GRUNER*] Mr. Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street to see you, sir.

GRUNER: [*Taking card from tray*] Sherlock Holmes? We know that name, don't we, Shinwell?

SHINWELL: I believe so, sir.

GRUNER: This should be most interesting. You may show him in.

SHINWELL: Very good, sir. [*Exits*]

GRUNER stands, takes Chinese vase from shelf and admires it.

SHINWELL: [*Enters again with HOLMES following*] Mr. Holmes, sir.

HOLMES: How do you do?

GRUNER: How do you do? [*Replacing vase*] Could I offer you a cup of tea?

HOLMES: No, thank you, Baron.

GRUNER: Ah, that will be all, Shinwell.

SHINWELL: Very good, sir. [*Exits*]

GRUNER: Pray sit down, Mr. Holmes.

Both sit.

HOLMES: Thank you.

GRUNER: I rather thought, Mr. Holmes, that I should be seeing you sooner or later. You have been engaged, no doubt, by General de Merville to endeavor to stop my marriage to his daughter, Violet. That is so, is it not?

HOLMES: It is.

GRUNER: My dear man, it is not a case in which you can possibly succeed. You will only ruin your own well-deserved reputation. Let me strongly advise you to draw off at once.

HOLMES: It is curious, Baron Gruner, but that was the very advice I intended to give you. I have a respect for your brains, and that little which I have seen of your personality has not lessened it. No one wants to rake up your past and make you unduly uncomfortable.

GRUNER: [*Chuckling*] Excuse my amusement, Mr. Holmes, but it is really funny to see you trying to play the hand you have been dealt. It has no cards in it.

HOLMES: You are now in smooth waters, but if you persist in this marriage, you will raise up a swarm of powerful enemies, who will not leave you alone until they have made England too hot to hold you. Is the game worth it?

GRUNER: [*Still chuckling*] I don't think anyone could do it better, but it is rather pathetic all the same. Not a color card there, Mr. Holmes. Nothing but the smallest in the pack.

HOLMES: So you think.

GRUNER: So I know. Let me make the thing clear to you, for my own hand is so strong that I can afford to show it. I have been fortunate enough to win the entire affection of this lady. This in spite of the fact that I told her very clearly of all the unhappy incidents in my past life. She fully expects that certain wicked and designing persons -- I hope you recognize yourself -- will come to her and tell her those things.

HOLMES: Yet she has agreed to listen to what I have to say.

GRUNER: No doubt she has, for she is quite amenable to her father's will -- save only in this one little matter.

HOLMES: [*Rising*] Well, Baron, there seems to be no more to say, so I shall take my leave. It has been an enlightening experience to meet you.

GRUNER: It has indeed, although I had expected perhaps a little more from you. By the way, Mr. Holmes, did you know M. LeBrun, the French agent?

HOLMES: Yes.

GRUNER: Do you know what befell him?

HOLMES: I heard that he was beaten by some Apaches in the Montmartre district and crippled for life.

GRUNER: Quite true, Mr. Holmes. By a curious coincidence he had been inquiring into my affairs only a week before.

HOLMES: So?

GRUNER: [*Rising and ringing for butler*] Don't do it, Mr. Holmes. It's not a -- lucky thing to do. Several have found out.

SHINWELL: [*Entering*] Yes, sir?

GRUNER: Please show Mr. Holmes out, Shinwell.

SHINWELL: Very good, sir. [*To HOLMES*] This way, sir.

HOLMES: Good day, Baron.

GRUNER: Good day, Mr. Holmes. CURTAIN

SCENE 3

221-B. Next morning. Enter HOLMES and Kitty WINTER.

HOLMES: Ah, here we are, Miss Kitty Winter. Pray have a seat.

They both sit.

WINTER: Thankee, sir.

HOLMES: I'm pleased to have located you.

WINTER: Oh, I'm easy enough to find! Just send my mail to Hell, London! But, by cripes, there is another who would be down in a lower Hell than I've ever known if there was any justice in the world! That is the man you are after, Mr. Holmes.

HOLMES: I gather we have your good wishes.

WINTER: If I can help to put him where he belongs, I'm yours to the rattle. You needn't go into my past, Mr. Holmes. That's neither here nor there. But what I am, Adelbert Gruner made me. If I could pull him down!
[*Clutching the air frantically with her hands*] Oh, if I could only pull him into the pit where he has pushed so many!

HOLMES: Do you know of the murder of his wife?

WINTER: Of his wife? Ha! I caught a glimpse of that and one or two other murders besides. He would speak of someone in his velvet way, then look at me with a steady eye and say, "He died within a month, you know." And it wasn't hot air either. But I paid little notice -- you see. Whatever he did went with me. That's because I loved him at the time. But there was one thing of his that really shook me. By cripes, if it wasn't for his poisonous, lying tongue, I'd have left him the very night he showed it to me.

HOLMES: And that was?

WINTER: A book -- a brown leather book, with his coat of arms in gold on the outside. I think he was a little drunk that night, or he'd never have shown it to me.

HOLMES: What was it, then?

WINTER: I tell you, Mr. Holmes, some men collect stamps or butterflies and they take pride in their collections. Well, this man collects women. It's all in that book -- photographs, names, details -- oh, those details. You'd expect no man, even if he came from the gutter, to put together such a beastly collection! He could have called it "Souls I have ruined." He could have put that on the outside.

HOLMES: And where is this literary gem likely to be found today?

WINTER: He's a precise, tidy cat of a man, so probably it is still in the pigeon-hole of the old bureau in the inner study. You know his house?

HOLMES: I've been in the study.

WINTER: Have you, though? You haven't been slow on the job. Maybe dear Adelbert has met his match this time. But you would have been in the outer study. That is the one with all the Chinese crockery in it. Then just down the hall behind it is the inner study -- a small room where he keeps his papers and things.

HOLMES: Is he not afraid of burglars?

WINTER: He can look out for himself. Besides, what is there for a burglar -- unless they got away with all that fancy pottery?

Knock at door.

HOLMES: Ah, that will be our visitor. Just remain seated, Miss Winter. [*Rises, walks to door, and opens it*] Ah, no doubt Miss Violet De Merville herself. Pray come in, Miss. I am Sherlock Holmes.

Violet DE MERVILLE enters, eyeing HOLMES coldly.

DE MERVILLE: Sir, your name is familiar to me. You have summoned me here to malign my fiance, Baron Gruner. It is only at my father's request that I see you at all, and I warn you in advance that anything you can say could not possibly have the slightest effect upon my mind.

HOLMES: Would you knowingly marry a murderer?

DE MERVILLE: I am aware that Adelbert -- that my fiance -- has had a stormy life, in which he has incurred bitter hatreds and unjust aspersions. You are only the last of a series who have brought their slanders before me. Possibly you mean well, though I learn that you are a paid agent who would as willingly act *for* the Baron as *against* him.

HOLMES: I assure you, madame --

DE MERVILLE: I assure *you*, sir, that I love him and that he loves me, and that the opinion of all the world is no more to me than the twitter of those birds outside your window. If his noble nature has ever for an instant fallen, it may be that I have been especially sent to raise it to its true and lofty level. And this young person - [*Indicating WINTER*] I am not clear as to who she might be.

WINTER: [*Hotly springing from her chair*] I'll tell you who I am! His last mistress! One of a hundred that he has tempted and used and ruined and thrown into the dust heap. Well, *your* dust heap is more likely to be a grave, and maybe that's for the best. Whether it's a broken heart or whether it's a broken neck, he's sure to get you one way or another!

DE MERVILLE: [*Coldly*] I should prefer not to discuss these matters, Mr. Holmes.

WINTER: [*Very angrily*] I tell you, you foolish woman, if you marry this man it will be the death of you! It's not out of love for you that I'm speaking. I don't care a tinker's curse whether you live or die. It's out of hate for him and to spite him and to get back on him for what he did to me. And you needn't look at me like that, my fine lady, for you will be even lower than I am when he is through with you.

DE MERVILLE: I am thoroughly aware of the three or four passages in my fiance's life in which he allowed himself to become entangled with such designing women as this one, Mr. Holmes, and I am assured of his hearty repentance for any evil which anyone imagines he may have done.

WINTER: [*Screaming*] *Three or four!* You fool! You unutterable fool!

DE MERVILLE: [*Moving towards door*] Mr. Holmes, I have no choice but to bring this interview to an end. I have obeyed my father's wishes in coming to see you, but I do not feel compelled to listen the ravings of this person.

WINTER: [*Dashes at DE MERVILLE, hands outstretched*] I'll show you, you bloody vixen!

HOLMES: [*Physically restraining WINTER*] Perhaps you had indeed better go, Miss de Merville. I must apologize for the intemperance of my companion. But you must recognize in her the handiwork of the Baron.

DE MERVILLE: I recognize in her the handiwork of the devil. Good day, Mr. Holmes. [*Exits*]

WINTER: What do we do now?

HOLMES: We must plan some fresh opening move, for this gambit clearly is not going to work. I'll keep in touch with you, and we shall take action very shortly.

Door bursts open. Enter Porky JOHNSON and SHINWELL, each well-dressed but wearing much artificial facial hair and carrying sticks.

JOHNSON. [*To SHINWELL*] Got your pistol? Hold it on them.

SHINWELL: Very good, Master Porky.

JOHNSON. Did the gov'ner say anything about the girl?

SHINWELL: He failed to mention her, sir.

JOHNSON. Then she'd better be leaving. You hear that? Get out! Get out!

WINTER: What do you want in here?

JOHNSON. You heard me! Out!

HOLMES: I should suggest that you follow their advice.

JOHNSON. And no going to the police! D'ya hear? Else we'll be coming for you next! Right, Shiny?

SHINWELL: I should be of that opinion, sir.

HOLMES: You had better depart at once. I am accustomed to entertaining extraordinary guests. Allow me to attend to this pair according to my usual customs.

WINTER: Oh, well, if you say so. You *sure* you'll be all right?

HOLMES: I anticipate a most diverting afternoon.

Exit WINTER.

JOHNSON. Now, let's let him have it!

SHINWELL: Very good, sir.

JOHNSON *and* SHINWELL *descend upon* HOLMES, *beating him mercilessly with their sticks. There are profuse grunts and appropriate comments. Finally HOLMES is on the floor, senseless.*

JOHNSON. Let him have a few more with the boot.

SHINWELL: Very good, sir.

Each give the prostrate figure several boots. Then JOHNSON moves towards door and SHINWELL follows him.

JOHNSON. Now, it's time to get out of here. Ta-ta, Mr. Sherlock Holmes.

SHINWELL: [*Exiting*] Pleasant dreams, sir.

CURTAIN

SCENE 4

That evening. Same setting as Scene 2. GRUNER is seated, reading newspaper. Enter SHINWELL with calling card on small tray.

SHINWELL: Dr. Hill Barton of Half Moon Street to see you, sir. [*Offers tray to GRUNER*]

GRUNER: [*Taking card*] Dr. Hill Barton? Oh, yes. I received a note from him this morning. Claims to have an entire set of Ming saucers to sell.

SHINWELL: Would that not greatly augment your collection, sir?

GRUNER: Of course it would. But I have never heard of this chap. And to my knowledge there is but one such set in all of England, and it is in the possession of King Edward himself.

SHINWELL: Shall I turn him away, sir?

GRUNER: No. You'd better show him in. But first, have you seen the newspaper?

SHINWELL: I could not help but notice the heading, sir.

GRUNER: Yes. "Murderous attack on Sherlock Holmes". You might enjoy this fateful paragraph: "We learn with regret that Mr. Sherlock Holmes, the well-known private detective, was the victim this morning of a murderous assault which has left him in a precarious position". Precarious position! Do you hear, Shinwell?

SHINWELL: Yes, sir.

GRUNER: [*Reads*] "The event occurred about twelve o'clock in Mr. Holmes's residence in Baker Street. Mr. Holmes was beaten about the head and body, receiving injuries which the doctors describe as serious. The miscreants who attacked him were observed by the landlady. They appear to have been two respectably dressed, bearded men, who were armed with sticks. No doubt they belong to that criminal fraternity which has so often had occasion to bewail the activity and ingenuity of the injured man, who unfortunately is not expected to live. The stupid meddler! He will know that we had a hand in it, but he'll never be able to prove anything, even if he manages to survive.

SHINWELL: No, sir.

GRUNER: Now, you'd better send in Dr. Hill Barton. Who knows? Perhaps he actually has somehow acquired the set he describes.

SHINWELL: Very good, sir. [*Exits*]

GRUNER: [*Stands, takes Chinese vase from shelf and admires it*] Exquisite! Exquisite!

SHINWELL and Dr. Hill BARTON enter, the latter carrying a doctor's bag.

SHINWELL: Dr. Barton, sir.

BARTON: How do you do?

GRUNER: How do you do? Ah, that will be all, Shinwell.

SHINWELL: Very good, sir. [*Exits*]

GRUNER: Pray sit down, Doctor. I was just looking over my own treasures and wondering whether I could afford to add to them. This little Tang specimen should interest you. It dates from the seventh century.

BARTON: Lovely. I have never seen finer workmanship or a richer glaze.

GRUNER: Quite so. [*Replaces vase*] Have you the Ming saucer with you?

BARTON: It is here. [*Removes saucer from bag*]

GRUNER: May I examine it?

BARTON: Certainly. [*Gives saucer to GRUNER*] Be careful not to break it.

GRUNER: [*Looks sharply at BARTON*] Be careful --? Hm. Of course. [*Seats self under lamp, and scrutinizes saucer very carefully*]

BARTON: Is it not as I described?

GRUNER: Very fine -- very fine indeed. And this is one of a set of six?

BARTON: It is.

GRUNER: How can I have been unaware of these specimens? I know of but one such set in England, and it is certainly not likely to be on the market. Would it be indiscreet to ask, Dr. Hill Barton, how you obtained this?

BARTON: Does it really matter? You can see that the piece is genuine, and, as to the value, well, I am content to abide by the appraisal of an expert.

GRUNER: Very mysterious. In dealing with objects of such value, one naturally wishes to know all about the transaction. That the piece is genuine is certain. But suppose -- forgive me, but I must take every possibility into account -- just suppose that it should come to light that you had no right to sell?

BARTON: I would guarantee you against any claim of the sort.

GRUNER: Thereby unfortunately opening up the question as to what your guarantee is worth.

BARTON: My bankers would answer that.

GRUNER: Quite so. And yet the whole transaction strikes me as, shall we say, rather unusual.

BARTON: We can do business or we cannot. I have given you the first option as I understood you to be a connoisseur, but I shall have no difficulty in other quarters.

GRUNER: Who told you that I was a connoisseur?

BARTON: You have written a book on the subject.

GRUNER: Have you read it?

BARTON: No.

GRUNER: Dear me. It grows increasingly mysterious. You are a connoisseur with some most valuable pieces in your collection, and yet you have never troubled to consult the one work which would tell you the real meaning and value of what you hold? How do you explain that?

BARTON: I am a busy man. A doctor. A doctor in practice.

GRUNER: And to prove the point you have brought along your bag. However, that is no answer. If a man has a hobby he follows it up, whatever his other pursuits may be. I am obliged to tell you, Doctor -- if you are indeed a doctor -- that the incident becomes more and more suspicious.

BARTON: [*Rising*] I say, now!

GRUNER: I shall test you with a few questions.

BARTON: Test me?

GRUNER: What do you know of the Emperor Shomu and how do you associate him with the Shoso-In near Nara?

BARTON: Indeed, sir!

GRUNER: Dear me, does that puzzle you? Then tell me a little about the Northern Wei dynasty and its place in the history of ceramics.

BARTON: This is intolerable! I came here to do you a favor, and not to be examined like a schoolboy! I certainly shall not submit to such a treatment!

GRUNER: Now, sir, just what is the game? You are here as a spy. Is that not correct?

BARTON: A spy? You are mad, sir.

GRUNER: A spy! Aha! You are an emissary of -- Holmes!

BARTON: Holmes? Holmes who?

GRUNER: Of course, Holmes! It is he who plays this trick! The fellow is on his deathbed, so he sends his lackey to keep watch on me.

BARTON: Nonsense!

GRUNER: Well, Doctor -- Just a moment! Doctor! That's it! I hear that he does keep a doctor about him! Is it Benson? No. Wilson? No, no! Ah, I have it! Watson! That's it! Dr. Watson! [*Rings for butler*] Well, my friend, you have made your way in here without leave, but you will find it infinitely more difficult to find your way out!

BARTON: I assure you, sir --

SHINWELL: [*Entering*] You rang, sir?

GRUNER: Shinwell, please see to it that under no circumstance is Dr. Watson permitted to leave this room. If necessary, employ the most extreme of measures.

SHINWELL: [*Simultaneously raises eyebrow and produces revolver*] Did you say Dr. Watson, sir?

GRUNER: I did. Now, I must take a look around to see if anyone else has entered the house. Meanwhile, Doctor, I assure you that you could not possibly be in better hands. [*Exits*]

BARTON: This is a terrible mistake.

SHINWELL: [*Holding gun on him*] Indeed, sir?

BARTON: The Baron has no right to treat me in this way!

SHINWELL: Of course not, sir.

BARTON: The police will be informed.

SHINWELL: Certainly, sir.

Sounds of a violent dispute come from adjacent room.

BARTON: Good heavens! What is that?

SHINWELL: I should say an altercation, sir.

Enter HOLMES, limping, and WINTER, carrying book, followed by GRUNER, who is holding pistol on them. HOLMES is swaddled in bandages, with bloodstains here and there.

GRUNER: Well, Mr. Holmes, you have considerably more life in you than I had been led to expect. Yet [*Jabs HOLMES brutally in the back with the pistol. HOLMES grunts and grimaces.*] I suspect there have been times when you have experienced greater physical comfort!

HOLMES: [*Somewhat hoarsely*] You have done your job well, Baron.

GRUNER: You will no doubt be happy to be reunited with your old friend, Dr. Watson.

BARTON: Watson? I tell you my name is Barton -- Dr. Hill Barton.

HOLMES: It's no use, Watson. The game is up.

BARTON/WATSON. I tried, Holmes.

HOLMES: You have done your best.

GRUNER: But his best was not enough. And now, Miss Winter, I'll have that book.

WINTER: You will not!

GRUNER: If I must take it from you I shall.

WINTER: You ain't going to get it any other way!

GRUNER: Very well. [*Motioning towards HOLMES and WATSON*] Shinwell, you watch these two.

SHINWELL: Yes, sir. [*Holds gun on HOLMES and WATSON*]

GRUNER: And now, Kitty Winter, I shall recover my property. [*Advances on WINTER and takes hold of book*]

WINTER: Don't you lay your bloody hands on me!

GRUNER: [*Wrenches book from her*] There, you vixen.

WINTER: [*Produces bottle and throws contents in GRUNER's face*] Take that, Baron Adelbert Gruner! You're not going to break any more hearts! Not any more, not any more! [*Rushes out*]

GRUNER: [*Drops pistol and book, covers face with hands, shrieks loudly*] Ah! Ah! Ah! Water! For God's sake, water! Ah! Ah! Ah!

WATSON. [*To SHINWELL*] You heard him, Shinwell! Fetch water. Quick, man, quick! [*Bag in hand, rushes to GRUNER, who is moaning loudly, and begins to treat him.*]

SHINWELL: Very good, sir. [*Unflappably takes carafe from sideboard and conveys it to WATSON*]

WATSON. [*Wiping the moaning GRUNER's face with cotton*] It is acid!

HOLMES: Oil of vitriol.

WATSON. Yes. Quick, Shinwell! Bring baking soda!

SHINWELL: Certainly, sir. [*Exits*]

GRUNER: [*As WATSON continues to doctor him*] Oh - oh - oh! That she-devil! That hell-cat, Kitty Winter! That she-devil! She shall pay! She shall pay!

HOLMES: No doubt she shall. But so shall you, Baron Gruner. Tell me, Watson. Do you now regard this face as one which is likely to charm many members of the fairer sex?

WATSON. Holmes! Please! Is the fellow not suffering enough?

HOLMES: I perceive that you have acquired a patient. And I -- [*Bending to pick up book*] -- have acquired a book -- aah! [*Emits cry of pain, rises, then with some effort succeeds in retrieving pistol and book, which he scans*]

GRUNER: God in Heaven, this pain is more than I can bear!

HOLMES: I can well understand. I am myself at death's door.

SHINWELL: [*Entering with container*] Your baking soda, sir.

WATSON. Good, let me have it. Then get me some more water.

SHINWELL: Very good, sir. [*Exits*]

During the ensuing conversations, WATSON continues to treat GRUNER, who continues to moan.

HOLMES: This is certainly the book toward which the impulsive Kitty Winter directed us. If it will not break off the marriage with Violet de Merville, nothing ever could. No self-respecting woman could stand it.

WATSON. It is his love diary?

HOLMES: It is his lust diary.

SHINWELL: [*Enters with pail of water*] Your water, sir.

WATSON. Just set it down. Thank you, Shinwell. That will be all for now.

SHINWELL: Very good, sir. [*Exits*]

HOLMES: I realized what a tremendous weapon we would have if only we could lay our hands upon this intimate little volume. But I knew also that the Baron here would guard it well. Then his assault upon me and your subsequent medical reports to the newspaper caused him to think that no precautions were needed against me. There seemed to be a good chance that the house could be burgled in the evening, if his absence from the inner study could be assured. How to keep him occupied elsewhere in the house? Ah, that is where your Ming saucer came in.

GRUNER: Oh! Oh! You devil, Holmes.

HOLMES: Thank you. I had to be sure of the position of the book, since my time to act was limited by your knowledge of Chinese pottery. Therefore I brought along the girl, who went straight to it.

GRUNER: And the two of you -- oh! oh!- - devised this -- oh!- - horrible treatment of me!

HOLMES: How could I guess what the little packet was which she so carefully carried under her cloak? I thought that she had come altogether on my business, but it seems she had some of her own. Besides, Baron, I have managed to survive your not overly pleasant treatment of me, and I suspect that you will succeed in surviving that of Miss Winter -- and perhaps even that of Dr. Watson.

WATSON. Please, Holmes, have mercy on the poor beggar.

HOLMES: As he has had mercy on *his* victims? No, no. [*Indicating GRUNER's face*] Who but himself has created this colossal ruin? Behold the wages of sin, my dear Watson. Behold the wages of sin.

FINAL CURTAIN