

THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

by **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**

Adapted by Robert E. Robinson

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Julia Stoner	Spinster
Helen Stoner	Sister
Dr. Grimesby Roylott	Stepfather
Henry Wadsworth	Smith
Ygor	Squatter
Zsu Zsu	Simian
Percy Armitage	Swain
Sherlock Holmes	Sleuth
John H. Watson	Side-kick

PLACE:

SURREY AND LONDON

TIME:

1884

SCENE 1

Stoke Moran. Bedroom. Nearly midnight. HELEN and JULIA Stoner.

HELEN: Have you noticed the terrible changes which have come over our stepfather since we settled here in Stoke Moran?

JULIA: How can I not have done? He has become a far different man since we left our home back in India. For one thing, he made friends with the neighbors there.

HELEN: Indeed he did. But here in England, if he sees a neighbor at all, he invariably picks a fight with him.

JULIA: And he collects such odd sorts of individuals about him.

HELEN: Gypsies camping everywhere on the grounds.

JULIA: And the animals—the cheetah and that loathsome creature he affectionately calls his pet baboon.

HELEN: Roaming about the grounds, particularly at night.

JULIA: And terrifying anyone who ventures upon the premises. Still, he has raised no objection to my marriage.

HELEN: Only two weeks off. I'll miss you, Julia.

JULIA: And I'll miss you terribly. But still, I'm very happy.

HELEN: [*Clock strikes twelve as she speaks*] I'm so happy for both of you. My, is it midnight already? We'd better get some rest.

JULIA: Of course, Helen. [*Goes to door, starts to open it, then pauses and turns*] Helen?

HELEN: Yes?

JULIA: This may sound foolish, but have you—

HELEN: Have I what?

JULIA: Well, have you ever heard the sound of a whistle—in the dead of night?

HELEN: A whistle? At night? What an odd question!

JULIA: I don't suppose that you could possibly sometimes whistle in your sleep?

HELEN: [*Laughing*] Not very likely. I don't whistle all that well when I'm awake.

JULIA: Well, Helen, the last few nights, I'm certain that I have heard a low, clear whistle—repeated several times. It has awakened me.

HELEN: When has this been?

JULIA: Three o'clock. Perhaps four. I cannot tell where it has come from—perhaps from the next room, perhaps from the outside.

HELEN: You are really certain you've heard it?

JULIA: Positive.

HELEN: Well, our stepfather's room is next to yours. He sometimes does strange things, but still I can't quite imagine his whistling at three in the morning. You must have heard some strange sound from the outside.

JULIA: Those wretched Gypsies. Or one of our stepfather's animals.

HELEN: Very likely.

JULIA: Yet if it were on the lawn, I wonder that you did not hear it also.

HELEN: Ah, but I sleep much more heavily than you.

JULIA: True. Well, I'm sure that it is of no great consequence. Good night, Helen.

HELEN: Good night, Julia.

JULIA exits, closing door behind her. HELEN walks toward bed, but then pauses.

HELEN: Maybe I'll read a little before I retire.

She goes to chair and sits. She picks up a book from table next to chair, then thumbs through pages to find her place.

Ah, here I am. [*Silently begins to read*]

CURTAIN

SCENE 2

Same as the previous scene, but three hours later. HELEN is asleep in the chair, the book on her lap.

HELEN: [Starting] Oops! Two o'clock! I must have fallen asleep—just as young Mr. Chuzzlewit was about to sail for the colonies. [Setting book aside] Well, time to retire.

Offstage wild scream of a terrified woman.

HELEN: Julia's voice! What can it mean?

Another such scream.

HELEN: Julia! Julia! What is it? [She rushes to the door.]

A low whistle sounds, followed by another agonized scream]

HELEN: The whistle—just as she said. Good Lord, could it mean?

HELEN opens door and JULIA reels into the room, alternately screaming in pain and gasping loudly for breath.

HELEN: Julia, what is it? Let me help you. [Takes hold of JULIA and leads her towards the bed.]

JULIA: Oh, my God, Helen. It was the band!

HELEN: The band?

JULIA: [Collapsing onto bed] The band—the speckled band. The speckled baaannn . . . [Sinks into unconsciousness]

HELEN: What shall I do? Help! Help! Stepfather! Stepfather!

ROYLOTT: [In nightclothes, rushing in] I'm coming! I'm coming! What is it? Good Lord, what is it?

HELEN: It's Julia. Something terrible has happened to her.

ROYLOTT: Brandy, Helen! Quick, girl! Brandy!

HELEN produces flask from drawer and hands same to ROYLOTT, who attempts to pour it down JULIA's throat.

ROYLOTT: Helen, hold her head. That's the way! Ah, but she will not take it! [Feels her pulse] It is of no avail. Her pulse is failing. She is leaving us.

HELEN: Julia, Julia!

CURTAIN

SCENE 3

Two years later. Grounds of Stoke Moran. Henry WADSWORTH carrying tool-box is trudging along, singing to himself.

WADSWORTH: Da da da Buttercup, da da da Buttercup, sweet little Buttercup, I.
Still I'm called Buttercup, sweet little—

ROYLOTT: [*Suddenly appearing and confronting WADSWORTH*] Stop right where you are. Right where you are! Who are you and what do you think you are doing on my property?

WADSWORTH: Wadsworth's the name. Henry Wadsworth. At your service.

ROYLOTT: Ah! The village blacksmith. Why are you trespassing—
trespassing—on my property?

WADSWORTH: Why, Dr. Roylott, the young miss sent for me.

ROYLOTT: Young miss? Which young miss? Well?

WADSWORTH: Miss Stoner, your honor.

ROYLOTT: You claim that she summoned you here?

WADSWORTH: That she did.

ROYLOTT: And for what reason?

WADSWORTH: Dunno. Something to fix about the fireplace, I reckon.

ROYLOTT: Fireplace, you say? Hah! We've six of them, all in good order. All of them! What do you have to say to that?

WADSWORTH: I only knows the young miss sent for me.

ROYLOTT: And when did you receive such a summons?

WADSWORTH: Not an hour since.

ROYLOTT: I see. And can you account for the fact that Miss Stoner has not left the house all day? Well, can you?

WADSWORTH: Now, I didn't exactly say that she came to fetch me herself.

ROYLOTT: Oh, you didn't *exactly* say. Stranger and stranger. Then how *did* you hit on the notion that you were wanted here? How indeed?

WADSWORTH: Well, if you must know, it was a young gentleman come to see me.

ROYLOTT: (*Aside*) Armitage, I should have known! (*To WADSWORTH*) Well, you've wasted a trip.

WADSWORTH: What do you mean by that?

ROYLOTT: Just what I said. You have come for naught. I'm the master of this house, and if anything is to be repaired about here, I shall say so.

WADSWORTH: Then you ain't got work for me to do right now?

ROYLOTT: Not right now and not later. Be on your way!

WADSWORTH: A pretty kettle of fish! What about my pay?

ROYLOTT: Pay? What pay?

WADSWORTH: Pay for coming here, of course. It's a good two mile hike each way. Four miles altogether. That's a good hour's time somebody owes me for.

ROYLOTT: Pay you? To come trespassing on my property? Nonsense! Be on your way!

WADSWORTH: When I gets paid, and not before!

ROYLOTT: You hear me, man? You'll get no pay! None! Now, off the estate before I throw you off!

WADSWORTH: You? You, throw *me* off? Hahaha! You might scare some folks about here, but not Henry Wadsworth the blacksmith.

ROYLOTT: For the last time, be on your way! On your way!

WADSWORTH: When I gets my pay, and not before!

ROYLOTT: Aaarrrrrrrgh!

ROYLOTT lunges at WADSWORTH and grabs him with both arms. WADSWORTH vigorously resists, and they grapple ferociously with appropriate cries of rage and pain as appropriate. At various times, each seems to have the edge, but at length ROYLOTT winds up on the ground, with WADSWORTH astride him.

WADSWORTH: Get tough with the blacksmith, will you, Dr. High and Mighty Roylott! Well, now, what do you have to say?

Enter YGOR and ZSU ZSU.

YGOR: Is there trouble, Dr Roylott?

ROYLOTT: Trouble? Does it look like trouble?

YGOR: Shall we help, Master?

ROYLOTT: Help? Should you help? What do you think, you idiot?

YGOR: Very good, Master. [*Motioning significantly*] Zsu Zsu!

With appropriate animal sounds, ZSU ZSU moves towards WADSWORTH.

WADSWORTH: Good Lord! The devil himself!

ZSU ZSU slams his fist down upon the head of WADSWORTH, who quietly drops to the ground.

ROYLOTT: Well, Ygor, do you intend to assist me to rise?

YGOR: Yes, Master. [*Helping ROYLOTT up*] I believe that we passed this way at the right time.

ROYLOTT: That's why I allow you Gypsies to stay around here.

YGOR: Master, what shall we do with the blacksmith?

ROYLOTT: [*Examines the unconscious WADSWORTH*] He found his way here.
Let him find his way home.

YGOR: As you say, Master. Come, Zsu Zsu.

All exit except WADSWORTH. Enter HELEN and ARMITAGE.

HELEN: Oh Percy! What is this?

ARMITAGE: A man, lying on the path.

HELEN: Who could it be?

WADSWORTH: [*Awakening*] Are they gone?

ARMITAGE: Why, it's that blacksmith I spoke to this morning. He was going to take a look at the grating in your fireplace. What's happened to you, Wadsworth?

WADSWORTH: Are they gone?

HELEN: You poor, poor man! Who could have done such a thing to you?

ARMITAGE: Need you ask?

HELEN: You mean—

ARMITAGE: Who else but that monster you call a stepfather? And perhaps one or two of his exotic pals.

WADSWORTH: That's who it were, all right. Dr. Roylott, and a Gypsy, and a big, hairy beast which came at me.

HELEN: Zsu Zsu the baboon.

ARMITAGE: Zsu Zsu is no baboon. He's a gorilla if I ever saw one.

WADSWORTH: Whatever he is, he sure took care of me.

HELEN: Do you feel better now?

WADSWORTH: [*Shuffling towards the exit*] Enough to make it back to my smithy where I belong.

ARMITAGE: Do you need any help?

WADSWORTH: Not from anybody at this devil-ridden place. You folks ain't heard the end of this. And you can bloody well fix your own fireplace.
[*Exits*]

ARMITAGE: Helen, I can't allow you to remain here any longer. You must come away with me.

HELEN: I haven't made up my mind.

ARMITAGE: Then I'll do it for you. You know in your heart you're going to marry me.

HELEN: Well I suppose so, but—

ARMITAGE: When?

HELEN: I must first ask Dr. Roylott.

ARMITAGE: Ask, nothing! You will *tell* Dr. Roylott. We shall be married as soon as possible.

HELEN: Ah, Percy. You are right, as always. [*They embrace*]

CURTAIN

SCENE 4

One week later. 7:00 A.M. 221-B Baker Street. HOLMES in dressing gown tapping on WATSON's door.

HOLMES: Watson, Watson!

WATSON: [*Donning dressing gown and entering*] Yes, Holmes. What is it, old man?

HOLMES: Very sorry to knock you up, but it's the common lot this morning. Mrs. Hudson has been knocked up, she retorted upon me, and I upon you.

WATSON: What is it, then—a fire?

HOLMES: No, a client. It seems that a young lady has arrived in a considerable state of excitement, and insists upon seeing me. Should it prove to be an interesting case, you would, I am sure, wish to follow it from the outset. I thought, at any rate, that I should call you and give you the chance.

WATSON: My dear fellow, I would not miss it for anything.

HOLMES: Excellent! Pray instruct Mrs. Hudson to show her up.

WATSON: [*Going to hall door, opening it, and calling*] Mrs. Hudson. Would you ask the young lady to step up? Thank you.

HOLMES: When young ladies wander about the metropolis at this hour of the morning, and knock sleepy people up out of their beds, I presume that it is something very pressing which they have to communicate. Ah, but here she is.

WATSON: Won't you please come in, my dear?

HELEN: [*Entering*] Thank you, sir.

HOLMES: Good-morning, madam. My name is Sherlock Holmes. This is my intimate friend and associate, Dr. Watson, before whom you can speak as freely as before myself. Ah, I am glad to see that Mrs. Hudson has had the good sense to light the fire. Pray draw up to it, for I observe that you are shivering.

HELEN: It is not the cold which makes me shiver.

HOLMES: What, then?

HELEN: It is fear, Mr. Holmes. It is terror.

WATSON: You must not fear. We shall soon set matters right, I have no doubt.

HOLMES: You have come in by train this morning, I see.

HELEN: You know me, then?

HOLMES: No, but I observe the second half of a return ticket in the palm of your left glove. You must have started early, and yet you had a good drive in a dog-cart, along heavy roads and on the side opposite from that of the driver, before you reached the station.

HELEN: That is so, but how—?

WATSON: There is no mystery, madam.

HOLMES: The left arm of your jacket is spattered with mud in no less than seven places. The marks are perfectly fresh. There is no vehicle save a dog-cart which throws up mud in that way, and then only when you sit on the left-hand side of the driver.

HELEN: Whatever your reasons may be, you are perfectly correct, I started from home before six, reached Leatherhead at twenty past, and came in by the first train to Waterloo. Sir, I can stand this strain no longer; I shall go mad if it continues. I have no one to turn to—none, save only one, who cares for me, and he, poor fellow, can be of little aid. I have heard of you, Mr. Holmes; I have heard of you from Mrs. Farintosh, whom you helped in the hour of her sore need.

HOLMES: Farintosh, Ah, yes. You surely recall the matter, Watson. It concerned an opal tiara.

HELEN: Oh, sir, do you not think that you could help me, too, and at least throw a little light through the dense darkness which surrounds me? At present, it is out of my power to reward you for your services, but in a month or six weeks I shall be married, with the control of my own income, and then at least you shall not find me ungrateful.

HOLMES: I can only say, madam, that I shall be happy to devote the same care to your case as I did to that of your friend. As to reward, my profession is its own reward; but you are at liberty to defray whatever expenses I may be put to, at the time which suits you best. And now I beg that you will lay before us everything that may help us in forming an opinion upon the matter.

HELEN: Very well. My name is Helen Stoner, and I live with my stepfather, who is the last survivor of one of the oldest Saxon families in England, the Royslotts of Stoke Moran, on the western border of Surrey.

WATSON: The name is familiar to me. Dr. Grimesby Royslott, is it not?

HELEN: My stepfather. A most formidable individual.

WATSON: Surely it is not he whom you fear, my dear.

HELEN: What I fear is a whistle I have heard in the night.

WATSON: A whistle?

HELEN: I know that it must sound strange, but it is the very whistle which heralded the death of my dear sister, Julia.

HOLMES: And when was this?

HELEN: Two years ago. She heard the sound each of several nights just before she her horrible death.

HOLMES: Exactly how did she die?

HELEN: In terrible agony. Just a week before her wedding, she burst into my chamber at three in the morning, screaming and gasping for breath, and collapsed upon my bed. She was dead almost at once.

HOLMES: And the whistle?

HELEN: I heard it myself for the very first time that night—as poor Julia lay dying.

WATSON: Do you know what she died of?

HELEN: That was never determined.

HOLMES: I presume that there was an official inquest.

HELEN: There was, but the coroner was unable to find any satisfactory cause of death.

WATSON: Poison, perhaps?

HELEN: The doctors examined her for it, but without success.

WATSON: Then what do *you* think that the unfortunate lady died of?

HELEN: It is my belief that she died of pure fear and nervous shock, though I do not know what could have frightened her, unless it was the Gypsies.

HOLMES: Gypsies?

HELEN: Yes, a band of Gypsies is always to be found on the plantation. And, as she lay dying, poor Julia actually managed to speak of a band. "It was the band," she said, "The speckled band." Those were the very last words she was ever to utter.

HOLMES: These are very deep waters.

HELEN: In the time that has passed since that dreadful night, my life has been until lately lonelier than ever. However, a dear gentleman has done me the honor to ask my hand in marriage. His name is Armitage—Percy Armitage—the second son of Mr. Armitage, of Crane Water, near Reading. Although my stepfather will lose a considerable income from my mother's estate when I marry, he has offered no opposition to the match, and we are to be wedded in the course of the next month.

WATSON: Then what brings you here?

HELEN: Just this. Two days ago some repairs were started on the west wing of the building, so that I was forced to move into the chamber in which my sister died, and to sleep in the very bed in which she slept. How could I find repose in that place, with the horror of my sister's death echoing and re-echoing in my mind?

WATSON: How indeed?

HELEN: Then, try to imagine my thrill of terror when, as I lay awake last night unable to think of anything but her mysterious and terrible fate, there suddenly came to my ears that very same dreaded whistle which had been the herald of her death.

HOLMES: The same? Are you certain?

HELEN: The very same. I sprang up and lit the lamp, but nothing was to be seen in the room. However, I was too shaken to go to bed again. I dressed, and as soon as it was daylight, I slipped down to London, with the one object of seeing you and asking your advice.

HOLMES: You have done wisely. There are a thousand details which I should desire to know before I decide upon our course of action. Yet we have not a moment to lose. If the doctor and I were to come to Stoke Moran to-day, would it be possible for us to examine these rooms without the knowledge of your stepfather?

HELEN: As it happens, he spoke of coming into town to-day upon some most important business. It is probable that he will be away all day.

HOLMES: Excellent. Are you averse to such a trip, Watson?

WATSON: By no means.

HOLMES: Then we shall both come. At what time do you propose to leave London?

HELEN: I have one or two things which I would wish to do now that I am in town. But I shall return by the twelve o'clock train.

HOLMES: We shall join you at the station. The trip to Surrey will afford an excellent opportunity for us to fill in many of those details which we now lack.

WATSON: Will you have breakfast with us, Miss Stoner?

HELEN: No, I must go. My heart is lightened already since I have confided my trouble to you. I shall look forward to seeing you again this afternoon. I shall see myself out. Good morning.

HOLMES & WATSON: Good morning.

Exit HELEN.

HOLMES: And what do you think of it all, Watson?

WATSON: It seems to me to be a most dark and sinister business.

HOLMES: Dark enough and sinister enough.

WATSON: Her sister must have been undoubtedly alone when she met her mysterious end. Yet what becomes of these nocturnal whistles, and what of the very peculiar words of the dying woman? The speckled band.

HOLMES: Ah, the speckled band! Quite possibly a reference to the Gypsies on intimate terms with this old doctor, who clearly has an interest in preventing his stepdaughter's marriage. I believe that there is good ground to hold that band near the heart of the mystery.

WATSON: I see many objections to any such theory.

HOLMES: And so do I. [*A clamor begins offstage*] It is precisely for that reason that we are going to Stoke Moran this day. [*The clamor becomes louder*] I want to see whether the objections are fatal, or if they may be explained away. [*The clamor by now is very loud indeed*] But what in the name of the devil!

ROYLOTT: [*Bursting violently into the room*] Which of you is Holmes?

HOLMES: My name, sir; but you have the advantage of me.

ROYLOTT: I am Dr. Grimesby Roylott, of Stoke Moran.

HOLMES: Indeed, Doctor, Pray take a seat.

ROYLOTT: I will do nothing of the kind. My stepdaughter has been here. I have traced her. What has she been telling you?

HOLMES: It is a little cold for the time of the year,

ROYLOTT: What has she been telling you? What? Speak up, blast you!

HOLMES: But I have heard that the crocuses promise well,

ROYLOTT: Ha! You put me off, do you? I know you, you scoundrel! I have heard of you before. You are Holmes, the meddler! [*Raises cane.*]

[HOLMES *chuckles*]

WATSON: Lower that cane, sir!

ROYLOTT: Holmes, the busybody! [*waves cane in air*]

[HOLMES *chuckles louder*]

WATSON: I say, lower it at once!

ROYLOTT: Holmes, the Scotland Yard Jack-in-Office! [*makes as if to strike HOLMES who merely laughs aloud*]

WATSON: [*Grabbing cane*] I'll take that!

HOLMES: Hahaha! Thank you, Watson. Your conversation, Dr. Roylott, is most entertaining. When you go out, please close the door, for there is a decided draught.

ROYLOTT: I will go when I have said my say. Don't you dare to meddle with my affairs. I know that Miss Stoner has been here. She has been here! I traced her! I am a dangerous man to fall foul of! [*Picks up poker from fireplace*] See here, how I treat this poker. [*Bends poker into a loop*] See that you keep yourself out of my grip, [*Thrusts poker down to floor and marches off, slamming door behind him*]

WATSON: He seems a most amiable person.

HOLMES: Indeed I am not quite so bulky, but if he had remained I might have shown him that my grip was not much more feeble than his own. [*Picking up poker and, with a sudden effort, straightening it, and handing it to WATSON*] There's your damaged poker.

WATSON: Well done!

HOLMES: Fancy his having the insolence to confound me with the official detective force! This incident gives zest to our investigation, however, and I only trust that our little friend will not suffer from her imprudence in allowing this brute to trace her. And now, Watson, we shall order breakfast, and then make preparations for what promises to be an adventurous evening in western Surrey.

CURTAIN

SCENE 5

Bedroom in Roylott house in Stoke Moran. Enter HOLMES, WATSON, and HELEN Stoner.

HELEN: Well, Mr. Holmes and Dr. Watson, you have now seen my own bedroom—

HOLMES: With no obvious pressing need for repairs at the end-wall.

HELEN: Exactly—and Dr. Roylott's bedroom.

HOLMES: A most interesting study. What did you make of it, Watson?

WATSON: Make of it?

HOLMES: Why, yes. Let us test your powers of observation. Pray relate what you saw in the doctor's chamber.

WATSON: Well, it is larger than this one—

HOLMES: Capital!

WATSON: —and is as plainly furnished. A camp-bed, a small shelf full of books, mostly of a technical character, a couple of chairs, a round table, and a large iron safe were the principal things which met my eye.

HOLMES: And on top of the safe?

WATSON: A small saucer of milk.

HOLMES: Excellent! Your powers are definitely growing. Miss Stoner, does your stepfather keep a cat?

HELEN: Why, no. There is only the cheetah and gorilla of which I told you.

HOLMES: Ah, yes, of course!

WATSON: What is a cheetah but a large cat?

HOLMES: Indeed, and yet a saucer of milk does not go far in satisfying its wants, I dare say. And, Watson, did you observe the dog-lash hung on one corner of the bed?

WATSON: No, I did not.

HELEN: We do not keep a dog, either.

HOLMES: It was not intended for a dog. It was curled upon itself and fashioned into a noose.

WATSON: What could that mean?

HOLMES: Ah, what indeed? It is a wicked world, and when a clever man turns his brains to crime, it is the worst of all. Now let us turn our attention to this chamber. What do you make of that bell-pull, Watson?

WATSON: Ordinary enough, I should say.

HOLMES: Try pulling it.

WATSON: [*Pulls bell-pull. There is no sound.*] Why, it does not ring.

HOLMES: Of course not. It is not attached to anything. You can see that it simply hangs from a hook, just below that ventilator.

HELEN: How very absurd! I never noticed that before.

HOLMES: The ventilator itself obviously does not communicate with the outside, but with Dr. Roylott's chamber.

WATSON: What a fool a builder must be to open a ventilator into another room, when, with the same trouble, he might have communicated with the outside air!

HOLMES: You will note also, Doctor, that the bed is clamped to the floor. It cannot be moved.

WATSON: Why, indeed it is! For what reason, do you suppose?

HOLMES: For what reason indeed! A ventilator is made, a cord is hung, and the bed beneath them is clamped to the floor.

WATSON: Holmes! I seem to see dimly what you are hinting at. We are only just in time to prevent some subtle and horrible event.

HOLMES: Subtle enough and horrible enough. When a doctor does wrong, he is the first of criminals.

HELEN: These remarks are as unnerving as they are incomprehensible. What are you saying?

HOLMES: Just this. Miss Stoner, it is very essential that you should absolutely follow my advice in every respect.

HELEN: I shall most certainly do so.

HOLMES: The matter is too serious for any hesitation. Your life may depend upon your compliance.

HELEN: I assure you that I am in your hands.

HOLMES: You must confine yourself to the room on pretence of a headache when your stepfather comes back. Then, when you hear him retire for the night, you must open the shutters of this window, undo the hasp, put your lamp here as a signal to us, and then withdraw quietly with everything which you are likely to want into the room which you used to occupy. I have no doubt that, in spite of the repairs, you could manage there for one night.

HELEN: Oh, yes, easily.

HOLMES: The rest you will leave in our hands.

HELEN: But what will you do?

HOLMES: We shall spend the night in this room, and we shall determine the cause of this noise which has disturbed you.

HELEN: I believe, Mr. Holmes, that you have already made up your mind.

HOLMES: Perhaps I have.

HELEN: Then, for pity's sake, tell me—what was the cause of my sister's death?

HOLMES: I should prefer to have clearer proofs before I speak.

HELEN: You can at least tell me whether my own thought is correct—that she died of some sudden fright.

HOLMES: No, I think there was probably some more tangible cause. And now, Miss Stoner, we must leave you. If Dr. Roylott were to return and find us here, our journey would be in vain. Please be brave. If you will do what I have told you to do, you may rest assured that we shall soon drive away those dangers which threaten you.

CURTAIN

SCENE 6

Same as SCENE 4. Late at night. HOMES and WATSON crouch in nearly total darkness, the moonlight through the small window being just adequate that they can be made out. They speak in stage whispers. Offstage the parish clock strikes three.

WATSON: Three o'clock! We've crouched here for hours, Holmes. Surely you can confide what it is we are awaiting.

HOLMES: Patience, old fellow.

WATSON: If it weren't for the little bit of moonlight, we'd be in total darkness. I can just make you out as it is.

HOLMES: That is how it must be.

A long, drawn-out cat-like call sounds offstage.

WATSON: My God! Did you hear it?

HOLMES: It is a nice household. That was the cheetah. But, wait. Do you not detect a foreign odor?

WATSON: Why, yes. Like that of burning oil.

HOLMES: And of hot metal. He's lit a dark lantern. Now listen carefully.

All is silent for a moment or two, then there is a steady hissing sound, as of steam escaping from a kettle.

HOLMES: [*Leaping up and speaking aloud*] It comes! The match, Watson. Quick, Watson, the match!

WATSON: [*Lighting match and speaking aloud*] Righto, Holmes. But what is coming?

HOLMES: [*Lashing furiously with his cane at the bell-pull*] You see it, Watson? You see it?

WATSON: I see nothing. [*A long, low, clear whistle sounds offstage*] Good Lord! The whistle! Just as Miss Stoner heard.

HOLMES: [*No longer lashing*] Just when I expected it. And now—

He is interrupted by a dreadful shriek offstage, which rises and falls but continues to sound.

WATSON: [*Shouting, so as to be heard over the shriek*] What can it mean?

HOLMES: It means that it is all over. And perhaps that is for the best. [*Opening door*] Take your pistol, and we shall enter Dr. Roylott's room. [*The shriek is getting closer*] But no. He is coming here. This way, Doctor!

ROYLOTT, clad in dressing gown and carrying coiled dog-lash, staggers into room, a speckled band wrapped about his brow. He continues to shriek until he collapses into a chair, gasping for breath.

HOLMES: [*Pointing*] Behold! The speckled band.

WATSON: A most peculiar head wrapping. But, I must administer to the poor man. But wait, Holmes! [*Stepping forward, and then stopping*] Holmes, the band just moved!

HOLMES: Indeed it did. It is a swamp adder! [*ROYLOTT's gasps are fading out*] Stand clear of it, my friend. It is the deadliest serpent in India, and there is nothing you could do to help the man.

ROYLOTT expires. Dog-lash falls to the floor.

WATSON: His breathing has stopped. I believe he has expired.

HOLMES: The victim of his own diabolical scheming, He sent the serpent through the ventilator, night after night, certain that sooner or later it would attack Miss Stoner, and his interest in her inheritance could never again be jeopardized by any wedding plans.

WATSON: The fiend!

HOLMES: Indeed. Each night he would summon the creature back through the ventilator by sounding the whistle you have heard, and then reward it with milk in the saucer you have seen. Then by means of the dog lash, he would grasp it and return it to the seclusion of his safe, which, incidentally we must do before Miss Stoner is informed of Dr. Roylott's misfortune.

WATSON: Why did the creature attack its master?

HOLMES: The blows from my cane chased it back through the ventilator and also aroused its snakish anger, so that it flew upon the first person it saw. In this way I am no doubt indirectly responsible for Dr. Grimesby Roylott's death, and I cannot say that it is likely to weigh very heavily upon my conscience.

WATSON: How shall we remove the serpent?

HOLMES: We could do so by means of the dog-lash with which Dr. Roylott has so thoughtfully provided us, were there not someone to deprive us of that pleasure.

WATSON: And just whom might that be?

HOLMES: That gentleman crouches outside that very door. Kindly escort him in.

WATSON: [*Going to door and peering out*] Well, I don't know whom you expect me to find. Oh, I say! What a thoroughly disreputable-looking creature! In here, you! [*Ushering Ygor in*]

HOLMES: The leader of the Gypsies, if I mistake not.

YGOR: I am called Ygor.

HOLMES: And the guardian of Dr. Roylott's menagerie. Am I not right?

YGOR: He brings food to me and my people. We watch over him and his pets.

HOLMES: Then perhaps you can remove that pet which now encircles his brow.

YGOR: Yes, Master.

FINAL CURTAIN