

(She sweeps away.)

WATSON. *(To us.)* I found the brothers in the parlor, as different and yet as similar as they could possibly be.

Scene Nine: 221B Baker Street

(The sitting room. SHERLOCK and MYCROFT are in conference. MYCROFT is a man of massive frame with a suggestion of uncouth physical inertia. "But above his unwieldy frame there is perched a head so masterful in its brow, so alert in its steely-grey, deep-set eyes, so firm in its lips, and so subtle in its play of expression, that after one glance one forgets the gross body and remembers only the dominant mind.")

MYCROFT. I tell you I need to see the letters first.

HOLMES. And I'm merely asking you why they're important.

MYCROFT. I will tell you as soon as you hand them over.

HOLMES. And I'll hand them over as soon as you tell me.

MYCROFT. That will be a first.

HOLMES. Oh please. My life is spent doing your bidding.

MYCROFT. It certainly is not.

HOLMES. Of course it is.

MYCROFT. You are preposterous.

HOLMES. You are provoking.

MYCROFT. You are galling.

HOLMES. You are absurd.

WATSON. When they were together, they became children again. It was like watching Tweedledee and Tweedledum.

(IRENE enters, looking ravishing.)

IRENE. Hello, gentlemen.

HOLMES. Miss Adler. This is my brother Mycroft.

MYCROFT. How do you do.

HOLMES. He wants to see the King's letters –

MYCROFT. Which I need as a matter of state business. I work for the British government.

WATSON. At times, he is the British government.

HOLMES. But I refuse to show them to him.

IRENE. The point is moot because you don't have the letters.

HOLMES. Of course I have them. I took them last night in your sleep, remember?

IRENE. And I took them back a moment ago.

HOLMES. That's impossible. They're in my safe.

IRENE. Not anymore.

HOLMES. Good God. The letters! Let me see those. I locked them up.

IRENE. And I burgled them.

MYCROFT. What an extraordinary woman.

IRENE. Are you as clever as your brother?

MYCROFT. Yes, and he freely admits it. But he's a bit of a show-off with his parlor games.

IRENE. His deductions, you mean.

MYCROFT. Yes, and of course they're all quite simple. I could do them all day. He is transparent.

IRENE. (*Laughing.*) Yes, I know.

HOLMES. I beg your pardon?

IRENE. (*Ignoring SHERLOCK.*) Now what can you deduce about me? A mere Highland Mary.

MYCROFT. Aha. That was a clue. You're testing me. Wicked woman. Well, let's see. Your parents emigrated to North

America and you grew up initially in Canada, then moved to the Southern portion of the United States. It's all in the vowels. From there you travelled, mostly in England where you were educated. You wear a watch chain like an English barrister – I saw you glance at it. You value education and you studied in Scotland, hence the Burns quotation. You also spent time in New York City, and that I deduce from your cheekiness.

IRENE. Anything else?

MYCROFT. You're a fencer. Witness the marks on your dominant hand. Épée or Sabre?

IRENE. Sabre.

MYCROFT. Naturally. And of course you're a Jewess: I assure you I say that with admiration. You wear a Star of David, made in Odessa, so your parents no doubt fought the Cossacks and fled the pogroms.

IRENE. It's a point of pride.

MYCROFT. I should hope so. The Holmes family is over one-quarter Jewish and I'm sure it's why my brother is so deeply attracted to you.

HOLMES. (*Annoyed.*) May we stick to business, please.

MYCROFT. (*To IRENE.*) I've embarrassed him, which is such a pleasure. May I see the letters?

IRENE. Why do you want them so badly?

MYCROFT. I want to look for a secret they harbor of national importance.

(*IRENE hands MYCROFT the letters.*)

IRENE. I'm afraid you're going to be disappointed. I've read the letters a hundred times and there's nothing in them but –

MYCROFT. Indiscretions? Oh I wouldn't be so certain, my dear. I suspect at least one of them contains a microdot.