

THE GREAT DETECTIVE & THE MISSING FOOTBALLER

A Stage Play by
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CHARACTERS:-

Sherlock Holmes - A Detective

Dr Watson - His Companion

Mrs Hudson - Their Landlady

Alex Busby - The Rovers' football team manager

Tom Balfour - A football player

Bobby Ellis - Another football player

Cynthia La Crème - A WAG

Luis Montoya - A Spanish-born Scottish football player

SETS:-

Holmes's living room in Mrs Hudson's lodging house. A dining table with two chairs and two armchairs round a fireplace. A sideboard with bottles of drink.

The Rovers' training ground.

SCENE ONE

HOLMES and DR WATSON sit at the dining table finishing their meal as MRS HUDSON stands by the table, ready to clear it.

WATSON

That was interesting, Mrs Hudson, what was it?

MRS HUDSON

Ravioli chow mein, Doctor.

HOLMES

Not a dish I'm familiar with.

MRS HUDSON

It's fusion cuisine, Mr Holms, a blending of Chinese and Italian culinary traditions, creating something suitably modern for the twenty first century. There's nothing wrong with being a bit adventurous.

HOLMES

Adventure is in my blood, Mrs Hudson, I just don't want it in my stomach.

MRS HUDSON begins lifting the plates slowly.

WATSON

Was there something else?

MRS HUDSON

I hate to bring this up, but you're two months behind with the rent.

HOLMES

Ah yes, the rent.

MRS HUDSON

I'm an old widow woman, Mr Holmes, and I can't keep two big strapping men in food and lodgings on fresh air.

HOLMES

We've been encountering some difficulties, Mrs Hudson.

MRS HUDSON

You'll be encountering even more if I put you out on the street.

WATSON

There's no need for that!

MRS HUDSON

I'll give you two days, or you can start packing your magnifying glasses.

She exits with the dishes.

HOLMES

That woman is a terror, Watson, a positive menace to my digestive system.

WATSON

It was a trifle on the spicy side.

HOLMES

Spicy? That excuse for a meal could be used to remove paint.

WATSON

What are we going to do about the rent?

HOLMES

She has a nerve to ask for rent. She should pay us to eat that slop.

WATSON

This lack of cases is proving detrimental.

HOLMES

Yes, that is a problem, this modern age is singularly lacking in master criminals for me to tackle. And the authorities, with their databases of criminals and their DNA profiling would seem to have an edge on my natural deductive skills, but I have faith, the Lord shall provide.

WATSON

Well, if he doesn't, I want first pick of the park benches.

There is a knock at the door and MRS HUDSON re-enters.

MRS HUDSON

There's a chap at the door, wants to see you.

WATSON

And who would that be?

MRS HUDSON

Wouldn't say.

HOLMES

Did he give you a card?

MRS HUDSON

No, he's definitely not a postman.

HOLMES

Have you been at the gin, Mrs Hudson?

MRS HUDSON

Just a nip, there's a chill in the air.

HOLMES

Oh, show him in.

MRS HUDSON leaves and returns escorting ALEX BUSBY, who is wrapped in a coat, hat and scarf. She leaves him and exits. BUSBY shakes hands with HOLMES and WATSON.

HOLMES

Pray, take a seat and tell me how I can help you.

WATSON

Feel free to remove your hat and coat.

BUSBY

(Mumbled through his scarf)

I'd prefer not to reveal my identity.

WATSON

What's that?

HOLMES

He said that he would prefer not to reveal his identity, Watson. I have honed my sense of hearing, Watson, through years of listening to the recordings of the George Formby. But come, sir, I have already surmised that you are Alex Busby, manager of the Rovers football team.

BUSBY unwinds the scarf covering his face.

BUSBY

But how?

HOLMES

Elementary. The scuffs on your shoes could only have come from an astroturf pitch and, as the season is approaching and only the cup final remains, you could be none other.

BUSBY

But I might have been a coach, or a player.

HOLMES

Hardly, the timbre of your voice revealed your age and your bearing is that of a manager, not a mere coach.

BUSBY

But this is amazing. I was informed that you had great powers of deduction, Mr Holmes, but this goes beyond reason.

HOLMES

Not at all, merely a matter of observation.

WATSON

He's brilliant, isn't he?

HOLMES

Come, Mr Busby, tell me your woes.

BUSBY

It's awful, Mr. Holmes, simply awful. Kenny Baxter, you've heard of him, of course? He's totally the hinge that the whole team turns on. I'd rather lose one from the back, and have Williams in goal. Whether it's passing, or tackling, or dribbling, there's no one to touch him, and then, he's got the head, and can hold us all together. He's a right midfield maestro. What am I going to do with a game against our fiercest rivals coming up? No, Mr Holmes, we're done for unless you can help me to find Kenny Baxter.

HOLMES

I confess, Mr Busby, that I am no great follower of our national sport, and was unaware of this ... Kenny Baxter.

BUSBY

But he's the greatest player of his generation, the captain of his country. Dear God, you're not a cricket man?

HOLMES

If anything, I favour ruggar. I take it you have mislaid your captain? Pray tell me of the event.

BUSBY

There's not much to tell. We were at training yesterday when he got a text on his mobile. When he read it he went totally white and rushed off without a word. We haven't heard from him since. I came to you directly I realised something was amiss.

HOLMES

I assume you have made enquiries?

BUSBY

Everywhere. He's not been home or at any of his usual haunts. If we lose this next game with United it will be a calamity, it's as simple as that. You'd be handsomely rewarded if you could find him.

HOLMES

I rarely work for financial reward.

WATSON

The rent, Holmes, the rent!

HOLMES

Have you informed the police?

BUSBY

God no, it would be in all the papers then and United would say he'd ran away, scared of playing them.

HOLMES

Very well, in this case, as he is of such importance, I shall find your Kenny Baxter for you.

BUSBY

Thank you, Mr Holmes, thank you. The entire nation will forever be in your debt.

HOLMES rises to his feet and escorts BUSBY to the door.

HOLMES

I shall call at your training ground tomorrow morning. Please ensure that all who were there at the time of his disappearance are present for questioning.

BUSBY exits as HOLMES returns to his seat.

WATSON

Sounds like a right good earner, there's money in football.

HOLMES

Indubitably.

WATSON

Any theories?

HOLMES

Facts, Watson, I must have facts.

WATSON

But you must have some notion of why a healthy young sportsman should just suddenly disappear?

HOLMES

I must think on it.

HOLMES looks around distractedly before reaching below his chair and pulling out a musical instrument, which he plucks.

WATSON

No, Holmes, not the banjo!