

# **The Novel Stage Adventures of Sherlock Holmes:**

## **The Valley of Fear**

*by Bart Lovins*

### *Characters*

Cecil Barker / John Douglas / Jack Malone / Birdy Edwards  
Bodymaster McGinty  
Inspector Alec MacDonald  
Ivy Douglas  
Sherlock Holmes – Precast: Clay Smith  
John Watson – Precast: Jared Eaton  
Professor Moriarty – Precast: John Finnegan

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## MACDONALD, HOLMES & WATSON

**Watson:** There is some evidence then that this man who entered the house and killed John Douglas was an American.

**MacDonald:** **(Shaking his head.)** Man, we are surely traveling over fast, I fear. Is it suicide, or is it murder - that's our first question, gentlemen, is it not?

**Holmes:** **(Judiciously.)** Well, state your case, Mr. Mac.

**(Holmes sits intently observant during the following, his forehead wrinkled with speculation.)**

**MacDonald:** **(Demonstrating with some difficulty.)** If it were suicide, then we have to believe that this man, Douglas, took off his wedding ring and concealed it. Then went outside in his dressing gown and trampled mud behind the curtain in order to give the idea someone had waited for him, opened the window...

**Watson:** **(Laughing.)** We can surely dismiss all that.

**MacDonald:** **(Acquiescing.)** Suicide then is out of the question, and a murder has been done.

**Watson:** In which case, we have to determine whether it was done by someone outside or inside the house.

**Holmes:** Well, let's hear the argument.

**Watson:** There are considerable difficulties both ways, and yet one or the other it must be. We will suppose first that some person or persons inside the house did the crime. They got this man down here at a time when everything was still and then did the deed...

**MacDonald:** With the queerest and noisiest weapon in the world so as to tell everyone in the vicinity what had happened?

**Watson:** That does not seem a very likely start, does it?

**Holmes:** No, it does not.

**MacDonald:** **(Demonstrating, again.)** Well, then, we are driven back to the theory that it was done by someone from outside. If so, the murderer got into the house between five and six. That is to say, between dusk and the time when the bridge was raised. The assassin slipped into this room and hid behind the curtain. There he remained until Mr. Douglas entered the room.

**Watson:** It was a short interview - if there were any interview at all - for Mrs. Douglas confirmed that she heard the shot shortly after her husband had left her alone in the bedroom upstairs.

**Holmes:** The candle shows that.

**Watson:** The candle?

**MacDonald:** **(The significance dawning on him.)** Exactly. **(Looking at the candle.)** The candle, which she confirmed was a new one, hasn't burned more than half an inch, judging by the pool of wax in the basin. He must have placed it on the table before he was attacked; otherwise, of course, he would've dropped it when confronted. This shows that Mr. Douglas was not attacked the instant that he entered the room.

**Watson:** That's all clear enough.

**MacDonald:** Well, now, we can reconstruct things on those lines. Mr. Douglas enters the room. He puts down the candle. A man appears from behind the curtain. He is armed with this gun. He demands the wedding ring.

**(Watson starts to interrupt but is cut off.)**

**MacDonald:** Heaven only knows why, but so it must have been. Then in cold blood, he shot Douglas in this horrible way. He drops his gun, and also, it would seem this queer card...

**Watson:** V.V. 341 - Whatever that may mean.

**MacDonald:** And escapes through the window and across the moat at the very moment when Cecil Barker was discovering the crime. How's that, Mr. Holmes?

**Holmes:** Well, you put the case strongly. **(Thoughtfully.)** It is certainly very interesting...

**MacDonald:** Ah!

**Holmes:** But just a little unconvincing.

**MacDonald:** **(His accent becoming more pronounced in his frustration.)** Man, it would be absolute nonsense if it wasn't that anything else is even worse! Here is a man who slips into a house with the deliberate intention of committing murder. He knows - if he knows anything - that he will have a difficulty in making his escape, as the house is surrounded by water. What weapon would he choose? You would say the most silent in the world. Then he could hope when the deed was done to slip quickly through the window, to wade the moat, and to get away at his leisure.

**Watson:** That's understandable.

**MacDonald:** But is it understandable that he should go out of his way to bring with him the most noisy weapon he could select...

**Watson:** Knowing well that it will fetch every human being in the vicinity to the spot as quick as they can run, and that it is all odds that he will be seen before he can get across the moat?

**MacDonald:** Come, Mr. Holmes, it's up to you to give us a lead.

## **BARKER, WATSON, HOLMES & MACDONALD**

**(Barker confidently enters another stage area with his left hand placed casually in his pocket.)**

**Barker:** (Aside.) I can honestly say no one was closer to John Douglas than I. We were partners in a successful mining claim at a place called Benito Canyon for ten years. We were doing very well when he suddenly sold out his share to me headed overseas. About two months ago, he wrote to say he'd met Ivy here in Sussex and they were engaged. **(Coolly brushing his mustache.)** At his invitation, I squared things away in California so that I might serve as best man for their wedding. That was about a month ago.

**(Lights Change. MacDonald leads on Holmes and Watson. Music out under dialogue.)**

**Watson:** (Aside.) Other than his personal history with the victim, Mr. Cecil Barker had very little to add to what he had already told the police.

**Barker:** (Aside.) Personally, I am convinced that the killer escaped by the window.

**Watson:** (Aside.) But in his own mind, he had very definite theories about the murder and was not shy about sharing them.

**Barker:** Besides, with the bridge up, there was no other possible way of escaping.

**Holmes:** (To Barker.) There is no evidence that he made it to the other side, and yet he could not possibly have been drowned in the moat as shallow as it is. How then do you explain what became of the assassin?

**Barker:** I confess I cannot, Mr. Holmes.

**Holmes:** Mr. Barker, I understand that you have often seen the very unusual mark upon Mr. Douglas's forearm?

**Barker:** (Nodding.) Frequently, sir.

**MacDonald:** You never had any speculation as to what it meant?

**Barker:** Douglas was a reticent man. There were some chapters in his life of which he never spoke. Even so, he had given me the impression that some danger associated with the marking was hanging over his head. That's why I first thought that someone was after him. When he left so suddenly for Europe, I believed that he must've had a warning of some sort.

**Holmes:** He told you this?

**Barker:** Some remarks of his had given me this idea, though he had never told me what the society was, nor how he had come to offend it.

**(Holmes hands Barker the card.)**

**Holmes:** And what do you make of the inscription upon this card?

**Barker:** (Reading.) V.V. 341?

**Holmes:** Yes.

**Barker:** (Nonchalantly.) Say, you don't suppose that this card had some reference to this same secret society.

**(Barker hands the card back to Holmes.)**

**Holmes:** A very insightful conjecture, Mr. Barker.

**MacDonald:** You don't associate his past with any particular part of America?

**Barker:** He had worked in Chicago and knew it well. He also spoke of the coal and iron districts out east. It seemed he had traveled a good deal before our time together in California.

**MacDonald:** Have you any reason to think his activities were criminal?

**Barker:** On the contrary, I never met a straighter man in my life.

**Watson:** But if a man had a danger hanging over him, why not turn to the police for protection?

**Barker:** (Shrugging.) Maybe it was some danger that he could not be protected against.

**MacDonald:** It is two months since Douglas left California. You followed him here, you say?

**Barker:** That is so.

**MacDonald:** And he has been married a month. You are English. Did you know Mrs. Douglas before her marriage?

**Barker:** No, I did not. I left Hampstead for America about twenty years ago.

**MacDonald:** But you have seen a good deal of her since.

**Barker:** (Sternly.) I have seen a good deal of them *both* since. (Fervently.) You can take it from me, gentlemen, that no man ever had a more loving, faithful wife.

**MacDonald:** (Unable to dismiss the subject.) You are aware that the dead man's wedding ring has been taken from his finger?

**Barker:** So it appears.

**MacDonald:** What do you mean by *appears*? It is a fact.

**Barker:** (Confused and undecided.) When I said *appears*, I meant that it was conceivable that he had himself taken off the ring.

**MacDonald:** The mere fact that the ring should be absent would suggest to anyone's mind, would it not, that the marriage and the tragedy were connected?

**Barker:** I can't profess to say what it means. But if you mean to hint that it could reflect in any way upon this lady's honor... (Barker's anger blazes for an instant, and then with evident effort, he gets a grip upon his emotions. Suddenly shrugging.) Well, you are on the wrong track, that's all.

**MacDonald:** (Coldly.) I don't know that I've anything else to ask you at present.

**Holmes:** There was one small point. When you entered the room, there was only a candle lighted on the table, was there not?

**Barker:** Yes, that was so.

**Holmes:** By its light, you saw that some terrible incident had occurred?

**Barker:** Exactly.

**Holmes:** You at once ran for help?

**Barker:** Yes.

**Holmes:** And yet when Inspector MacDonald arrived, he found that the candle was out and that the lamp had been lighted. That seems very remarkable.

**Barker:** **(After some signs of indecision.)** I don't see that it was remarkable, Mr. Holmes. The candle threw a very bad light. My first thought was to get a better one. The lamp was on the table, so I lit it.

**Holmes:** And blew out the candle before you sought help?

**Barker:** Precisely.

**Holmes:** Very good, sir. We will ring if we want you.

## DOUGLAS, WATSON, MACDONALD & HOLMES

**Watson:** (Aside.) With a deliberate look from one to the other of us, which had, as it seemed to me, something of defiance in it, Barker turned and left the room, and Mrs. Douglas entered. Her face was pale and drawn, like that of one who has endured a great shock.

**Douglas:** (Fearfully.) Have you found anything out yet?

**MacDonald:** You may rest assured, Mrs. Douglas, that nothing will be neglected.

**Watson:** (Aside.) But her manner was composed to a remarkable degree, very different from the tragic and distracted figure I had pictured.

**Douglas:** (With a nervous smile.) My thanks, gentlemen.

**Watson:** (Aside.) And the finely molded hand which she offered each of us when introduced was as steady as my own.

**Holmes:** Perhaps you can tell us something which may throw some light upon the matter.

**Douglas:** I fear not, but all I know is at your service.

**Watson:** (Aside.) Her sad, appealing eyes traveled from one to the other of us with a curiously inquisitive expression.

**Holmes:** We have heard from Mr. Cecil Barker that you did not actually see...

**(Watson interrupts this line of questioning with a purposeful cough. Music out under dialogue.)**

**Holmes:** (Delicately.) That you were never in the room where the tragedy occurred?

**Douglas:** No, he turned me back and begged me to return to my room.

**Holmes:** Quite so. You had heard the shot and at once came down.

**Douglas:** I put on my dressing gown and then came down.

**(Watson and MacDonald blush at the thought.)**

**Holmes:** Hum, yes. How long was it after hearing the shot that you were stopped by Mr. Barker?

**Douglas:** It may have been a couple of minutes. It is so hard to reckon time at such a moment. It was all like some dreadful dream.

**Holmes:** Any idea how long your husband had been downstairs before you heard the shot?

**Douglas:** No, I cannot say. I recall him grabbing a fresh candle, but I did not hear him go. He did the round of the house every night, for he was nervous of intruders. It is the only thing that I have ever known him fearful of.

**Holmes:** That is just the point which I want to come to, Mrs. Douglas. You met your husband here in Sussex?

**Douglas:** Yes, just a couple of months ago.

**Holmes:** In that time, have you heard him speak of anything which occurred in America that might bring some danger upon him?

**Douglas:** **(Earnestly.)** Yes, I have always felt that there was a danger hanging over him, but he refused to discuss it with me. Please understand, there was the most complete love and confidence between us, but he always desired to keep all alarm away from me. He thought I should brood over it if I knew all, and so he was silent.

**Holmes:** How did you know it, then?

**Douglas:** **(Her face lighting up with a quick smile.)** Can a husband ever carry a secret, and a woman who loves him have no suspicion of it? I knew it by his refusal to talk about some episodes in his American life. I knew it by certain precautions he took. I knew it by certain words he let fall.

**Holmes:** Might I ask what the words were which attracted your attention?

**Douglas:** There was an expression he had used when I questioned him. **(Quoting him.)** I have been through the Valley of Fear, and I am not out of it yet.

**Holmes:** Surely you asked him what he meant by the Valley of Fear?

**Douglas:** I did, but he would shake his head. **(Quoting him.)** It is bad enough that one of us should have been in its shadow, he would say. **(Quoting him.)** Please, God. May it never fall upon you!

**Holmes:** And he never mentioned any names?

**Douglas:** Why, yes. He was delirious with fever once after a hunting accident a week or so before we were wed. I remember there was a name that came continually to his lips. He spoke it with anger and a sort of horror. McGinty was the name - Bodymaster McGinty. I asked him when he recovered who Bodymaster McGinty was and whose body he was master of. **(Quoting him.)** Never of mine, thank God! He answered with a laugh, and that was all I could get from him. But there *is* a connection between Bodymaster McGinty and the Valley of Fear. I'm certain of it.

**MacDonald:** There is one other point. You said you and Mr. Douglas were married a month ago?

**Douglas:** Yes, we were wed as soon as Cecil could join us from California for the ceremony.

**MacDonald:** And your husband had no rival?

**Douglas:** **(Nervously.)** No. I was quite free. Why do you ask?

**Holmes:** His wedding ring has been taken. Does that suggest anything to you?

**(For an instant, the faintest shadow of a smile flickers over her face. Music in.)**

**Douglas:** I really cannot tell. It is certainly a most extraordinary thing.

**(Douglas rises, turns to leave, and then turns back to survey them all with a quick questioning glance. Then, with a bow, she sweeps out of the room. Watson closes the door behind her. Music out.)**



## **DOUGLAS, BARKER & WATSON**

**(Barker and Douglas enter and sit on the bench and whisper, unaware of Watson's presence.)**

**Watson:** (Aside.) With nothing better to do, I took it upon myself to take in the curious old-world garden which flanked the house. I hoped in that deeply peaceful atmosphere to forget for a time that darkened study with the sprawling, bloodstained figure on the floor...

**(Watson is interrupted by a little ripple of laughter from Douglas.)**

**Watson:** (Aside.) On the other side of a hedge farthest from the house, concealed from the eyes of anyone approaching, I became aware of voices.

**(Lights change. Music out. Previously, Douglas had been demure and discreet. Now all pretense of grief has passed. Her face quivers with amusement at some remark made by her companion, Barker, who sits forward, his hands clasped, and his forearms on his knees, with an answering smile. In an instant - but it is just one instant too late - they realize they are not alone and resume their solemn masks as Watson comes into their view. Barker rises and quickly places his left hand in his pocket.)**

**Watson:** (Transparently shocked and appalled.) Pardon the intrusion. I will leave to resume my walk.

**(Watson turns to leave. A hurried look passes between the other two. Music in.)**

**Douglas:** One moment, Dr. Watson?

**Watson:** (Coldly.) Madam?

**Douglas:** (Pleading.) Supposing that a matter were brought confidentially to Mr. Holmes' knowledge, is it absolutely necessary that he should pass it on to the authorities?

**Barker:** (Eagerly.) Yes, that's it. Is he on his own, or is he entirely in with the police?

**Watson:** I really don't know that I should be discussing...

**Douglas:** (Sincerely.) I implore that you will, Dr. Watson! You will be helping us - helping me - greatly if you will guide us on that point.

**Watson:** Mr. Holmes is an independent investigator and would act as his own judgment directed. Beyond this, I can say nothing, and I would refer you to him if you want fuller information.

**(So saying, Watson nods and leaves the couple to whisper behind the hedge. Lights change. Action is continuous.)**

**MALONE, MCGINTY & WATSON**

**Watson:** (Aside.) Through an atmosphere blurred with tobacco smoke and heavy with the smell of spirits, Malone made his way amid the crowd of men. At the far end, Bodymaster McGinty himself held court over the rougher elements of the town who fringed the broad, brass-trimmed counter.

**(Watson begins serving drinks as Malone audaciously elbows his way through the little group of courtiers fawning over McGinty. All goes silent as McGinty turns his eyes sharply upon this stranger who has entered his domain.)**

**Malone:** (To Watson.) Whiskey.

**(Watson turns to McGinty, who nods. Watson serves Malone.)**

**McGinty:** (Flinging a bar towel over his shoulder and reaching for a bottle.) Well, young man, I can't call your face to mind.

**Malone:** I'm new here, McGinty.

**McGinty:** (Watching him narrowly.) You are not so new that you can't give a gentleman his proper title.

**Malone:** Apologies, Councillor. I was advised to see you.

**McGinty:** Bodymaster will do, and who told you to see me?

**Malone:** Brother Thomas of Freeman Lodge 29, Chicago. I drink your health Bodymaster, and to our better acquaintance.

**(Malone raises his glass in salute and drinks.)**

**McGinty:** (Raising his eyebrows.) Oh, it's like that, is it? Well, we don't take folk on trust in these parts. I do things in my own time and in my own way. I'll have to look a bit closer into this, Mister...

**Malone:** Malone, Jack Malone.

**McGinty:** (Pointing to a door beside the bar.) Well then, Mr. Malone, come back here for a moment.

**(Malone nods, slips his hand casually in his pea-jacket pocket, and goes through the door into the back room. McGinty motions to Watson to take over the bar as he casually reaches under the bar to wash up. He follows Malone into the backroom while using a bar rag to dry his hands. Lights change as the two go into the backroom, separating them now from the Scowlers at the bar. In the darkness, the Scowlers continue humming 'Wayfaring Stranger' under dialogue.)**

**Watson:** (Aside from behind the bar.) There was a small room there behind the bar, lined with barrels and stacks of crates containing bottles, both empty and full.

**(McGinty, bar rag still in hand, bites thoughtfully on his cigar and surveys Malone disquietingly. Malone bears the inspection cheerfully, one hand in his coat pocket, the other twisting his mustache. Suddenly McGinty drops the bar rag revealing a wicked-looking revolver.)**

**McGinty:** See here, my joker, if I thought you were playing any game on us, it would be short work for you.

**Malone:** **(With some dignity.)** This is a strange welcome for the Bodymaster of a lodge of Freemen to give to a visiting brother.

**McGinty:** Aye, but just the same, have you heard anything of the lodge in these parts?

**Malone:** I've heard that it takes a man to be a brother.

**McGinty:** True enough, Mr. Malone, and what've you heard about the Scowlers?

**Malone:** Why I seem to have read of the Scowlers back in Chicago. A gang of murderers, are they not?

**McGinty:** Man, don't you dare to breathe the name of this lodge in connection with murder, stranger, for every whisper comes back to me, and I am not one that is likely to let it pass. Tell me now, why did you leave Chicago?

**Malone:** **(Laughing.)** I'm damned if I tell you that!

**McGinty:** **(Amused.)** Why?

**Malone:** Because no brother may tell another a lie.

**McGinty:** See here, you can't expect me, as Bodymaster, to pass into the lodge a man for whose past he can't answer.

**(Malone takes a worn newspaper cutting from his pocket.)**

**Malone:** **(Smiling grimly.)** Look at that clipping.

**(McGinty takes the article from Malone.)**

**McGinty:** **(Glancing it over.)** This is an account of the shooting of one Jonas Pinto on Main Street in Chicago.

**Malone:** So it is.

**(McGinty hands the clipping back to Malone.)**

**McGinty:** Your work?

**Malone:** **(Nodding as he pockets the worn paper.)** Some say so.

**McGinty:** **(Laughing.)** And you came to these parts because you thought you'd be welcome.

**Malone:** **(Smiling.)** That's about the size of it.

**McGinty:** You don't say! You'll be a mighty useful brother, I'm thinking! We can do with a man like you, for there are times when we'd soon be against the wall if we didn't shove back at those that were pushing us.

**Malone:** Well, I guess I'll do my share of shoving with the rest of the boys.

**McGinty:** Gar! You've got some nerve, friend Malone. **(Setting aside his weapon.)** You didn't even squirm when I shoved this gun at you.

**Malone:** It wasn't me that was in danger.

**McGinty:** Who then?

**Malone:** Why you, Bodymaster.

**(Malone draws a pistol from the side pocket of his pea-jacket. McGinty goes for his gun, but it's too late.)**

**Malone:** I was covering you all the time. I guess my shot would have been as quick as yours.

**(Malone puts his gun away and holds his open hand out to McGinty. McGinty shakes his hand.)**

**McGinty:** **(Bursting into a roar of laughter.)** By Gar! We've had no such a holy terror as you come through Vermissa in many a year. **(Grabbing a bottle from a crate.)** C'mon, let's drink.

## *Character Descriptions*

**Inspector Alec MacDonald** - Scotland Yard's law enforcement official on the Douglas case. An admirer of Holmes, MacDonald is Scottish, lean, intelligent, efficient, young, dour, and stoic.

**Cecil Barker / John Douglas / Jack Malone / Birdy Edwards** - This crucial and multi-dimensional character should be considered four different characters contained in one man. Introduced at the beginning of the story as John Douglas, this man appears to be a faceless victim, simply the object of Holmes' investigation. However, Douglas is later revealed to be very much alive and posing as "friend of the family," Cecil Barker. When he shares his history, we learn that Douglas once bore the name of Jack Malone when he was part of a notorious gang in the United States, not unlike the Irish Mafia. Finally, at the end of the play, we learn that Malone is actually a Pinkerton detective named Birdy Edwards. Throughout all four of his "identities," Edwards is described as fearless, intelligent, and good-humored. He is in his mid-50s, Irish and the same height and build as McGinty.

**Ivy Douglas** - John Douglas's wife is tall and beautiful. She suspects something is wrong with her husband regarding his past but knows not what it is. She and her husband decide to fabricate the crime scene, but then they confess to Holmes and the others. She is 20 years younger than her husband.

**Bodymaster McGinty / Body** - Discussed in Act I, but not fully introduced until Act II, McGinty is the central villain of the story within a story. The cruel and brutal leader of "the Scowlers," a murderous society not unlike the Mafia, McGinty is a fearsome leader, described as looking almost like a lion, with fierce eyes and a mane-like beard. McGinty is the undisputed lord of Vermissa Valley, which many call the "Valley of Fear." As the Bodymaster, he leads the Scowlers and rules over the valley, crushing anyone who gets in his way. He is in his mid-50s, Irish and the same height and build as Edwards.