



Daniel O'Donnell

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

Case of the Missing Time

2

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Case of the Missing Time

3

*To Principal Robert Isenberg
of the Freeport Jr. High School
for his many years in education
and continuous backing
of the arts programs.*

Case of the Missing Time

4

Case of Missing Time was first produced at Freeport Junior High School in 2007.

SHIRLEY HOLMES: Meggan Mcguire

DR. WATSON: Paige Steiner

MRS. HUDSON: Katie Pullano

BIG TEX GRISSOM: Curtis Hughes

JEEVES: Joey Sadecky

LAPLUME: Amanda Reesman

LIL SUE: Lydia Telford

LIL TEX: Kyle Zboran

HELGA: Sarah Macshane

FANNY GRISSOM: Gina Smith

SIR HENRY THOMAS: Connor Link

LADY THOMAS: Kasey Devlin

GLENDA MONROE: Rachel Lassinger

LADY THORNTON: Cassandra Steinke

UNDERSTUDIES: Taylor Bombalski, Cheyenne Eckman,
Melissa Cooper, Cara Milovac, Brandi Levish

Case of the Missing Time

MYSTERY/FARCE. Big Tex is extremely enamored with his Fanny—his wife, that is. So when his Fanny’s jewels and artwork go missing, Big Tex hires the great-niece of Sherlock Holmes and the great-granddaughter of Dr. Watson to solve the mystery. Holmes’ straight-talking housekeeper, Mrs. Hudson, goes undercover to collect clues from Big Tex’s monstrous children, sneering butler, timid French maid, and Gestapo-like TV-star nanny. Meanwhile, Holmes and Watson mingle with Big Tex’s guests, who include a melodramatic has-been actress and star of “Luna Craft Pygmy Queen,” a hard-of-hearing elderly neighbor who tends to turn up disrobed from time to time, and a mysterious magician from the Far East. Holmes and Watson have until the end of the weekend to solve the case so that Big Tex’s Fanny can once again glitter with jewels!

Performance Time: Approximately 80 minutes.

Characters

(4 M, 10 F)

- SHIRLEY HOLMES:** Great niece of Sherlock Holmes; arrogant but inept detective.
- DR. WATSON:** Great-granddaughter of Dr. Watson and the real brains behind the investigations.
- MRS. HUDSON:** The Holmes' crude, brash, outspoken housekeeper; great-granddaughter of Mrs. Hudson.
- BIG TEX GRISSOM:** Loud, rich Texan; wears a cowboy hat and boots.
- FANNY GRISSOM:** Big Tex's loud, friendly wife who has a gambling problem; wears a fancy dress and tiara like a beauty queen.
- LIL TEX:** 12, Tex and Fanny's spoiled and bratty son.
- LIL SUE:** 10, Tex and Fanny's spoiled, bratty daughter; wears a fancy dress and a tiara like a beauty queen.
- JEEVES:** Disgruntled, sarcastic butler who despises working for Americans.
- SIR HENRY THOMAS:** Old, hard-of-hearing, and a bit senile; uses a cane and has an Edwardian-type mustache.
- LADY THOMAS:** Sir Henry's young trophy wife.
- GLENDIA MONROE:** Has-been actress who is secretly working for a tell-all magazine.
- NANNY HELGA:** The Grissoms' German nanny; loud, tough, and Gestapo-like; has a German accent.
- LADY THORNTON:** The Grissoms' neighbor; a rich heiress and the head of a crime syndicate; the direct descendent of Professor Moriarty.
- LAPLUME:** The Grissoms' maid; likeable, overworked, and subservient; has a French accent.

Setting

Present day. The parlor room at Hamilton Manor, England.

Set

The set can be as elaborate or as simple as your budget allows. The parlor décor looks like the Old West meets jolly old England. The walls are decorated with tapestries, cheap paintings (like dogs playing cards), a Texas flag, security key pad, animal horns, etc. The parlor has a large hearth, a couch, two chairs, end tables, a round game table with chairs, and a wooden chair along the SL wall. There are three doorways: stage right, stage left, and upstage left. Black muslin can be used for the doors. There is a bookcase that opens to a secret passage. The bookcase can measure (5 feet wide x 7 inches deep x 7 feet tall). To keep it as light as possible, use 2 x 4's for the base and 1 x 1's for the frame. Cover it in luan plywood and then stain to desired color. Use two heavy-duty hinges and place on casters. For support, attach wooden braces at least 18" high in the back.

NOTE: For the parlor, there can be a chair rail (made with 1 x 3's) that goes around the room and divides the wall in half. Paint the top half of the wall one color and the bottom half another color. For a more Tudor-type look, run 1 x 3's vertically from the chair rail up every five feet or so and stain them the same color as the bookcase.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene 1: Holmes' apartment. There are two chairs and a small table with a lamp.

Scene 2: Parlor room of the Hamilton Manor, mid-morning.

Intermission

ACT II

Scene 1: Parlor, that evening.

Scene 2: Parlor, at the dinner party a short time later.

Scene 3: Parlor, 1 a.m., after the dinner party.

Scene 4: Parlor, 9 a.m., the next morning.

Scene 5: Parlor, one hour later.

Props

2 Books	Clown wig
Clarinet	Bathrobe, for Fanny
Cotton balls	Pinocchio nose
Tea tray, teapot, and teacups	Handcuffs
Maid's costume with apron, goofy white hat, and support hose, for Mrs. Hudson	Bathrobe and, for Lady Thomas
Suitcases	Striped prison cap
14 *Wristwatches	Trench coat and fedora, for Glenda
Serving tray	Pen
Champagne glasses	Pad of paper
Feather duster	Bathrobe, for Lady Thornton
Fake beard	Jester's hat
Black cloak with hood, for Lady Thornton	Bathrobe and long johns, for Mrs. Hudson
Bathrobe, for Holmes	Bathrobe, for Jeeves
Jackass mask	Bathrobe, for LaPlume
Inside out jacket with money attached to it, for Big Tex	Bathrobe, for Helga
Clown nose	Pajamas, for Lil Tex
	Pajamas, for Lil Sue
	Briefcase
	Papers

***NOTE:** Wristwatches can be easily made by hand. Just staple together watchbands made from 3/4-inch wide Velcro to watch faces made from foam cutouts.

Case of the Missing Time
ID

Sound Effects

Footsteps
Angry footsteps
Cell phone ringing
Wind
Thunder
Thunderclap
Grandfather clock chime

Case of the Missing Time

II

"Fear not,
Big Tex,
your Fanny
is in good hands."

—Holmes

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: Shirley Holmes' apartment. [Note: Scene can be played in front of the stage.] There are two chairs and a small table with a lamp. Watson is sitting in a chair reading a book. Holmes is standing up playing a clarinet badly, but it is obvious she thinks the music is beautiful. Holmes is concentrating hard on her playing. Watson is oblivious to the bad music because her ears are stuffed with cotton. Holmes stops playing and smiles with satisfaction.)

HOLMES: By George, I think I've got it. What say you, Watson, have you ever heard such a sound? *(No response.)* Watson? *(Hollers.)* Watson!

(Watson looks up and realizes Holmes is talking to her but doesn't want her to know about the cotton in her ears.)

WATSON: I'm sorry, old girl. I was immersed in my book and... *(Points to audience as if looking out the window.)* ...what's that there by the window?

(As Holmes turns, Watson takes the cotton balls out of her ears and shoves them down her blouse. Holmes turns back.)

HOLMES: What is it? I see nothing.

WATSON: I could have sworn I saw a Red-backed Shrike. Oh, what am I thinking? They wouldn't be here this time of year. Sorry, old girl. What were you saying?

HOLMES: *(Trying to sound impressive.)* What were you thinking, indeed, you silly bird? *(Laughs stuffily at her own joke.)* Ha. Ha. Ha. Red-backed Shrikes, Watson, are truly creatures of habit and would never be here this time of year.

Case of the Missing Time

13

WATSON: Actually, Holmes, it's more of a migratory need, where as habit is just that—a habit formed out of repetition and not a need for survival.

(Holmes pauses while she thinks of a positive reaction.)

HOLMES: Exactly! Once again, Watson, you have passed the test of awareness that I so often throw your way to keep you on your toes. Good show.

WATSON: *(Playing along as not to embarrass Holmes.)* Thank you so much, Holmes. You do keep me on my toes. *(Holmes dismissively waves her hand and peers out the "window.")* Before the awareness test you asked me something?

HOLMES: *(Without turning around.)* What? Oh yes, yes. I asked you if... *(Plays a few bad notes on her clarinet. Watson winces and holds her ears. Proud.)* ...you had ever heard such a sound.

WATSON: I can honestly say I don't think such a sound ever existed in all my born, or, unborn days.

HOLMES: *(Proud.)* My thoughts exactly. What better way to soothe the soul than music?

WATSON: *(Aside.)* Miming would be nice.

(Holmes turns around.)

HOLMES: What was that?

WATSON: *(Taken off guard.)* I, ah, was about to say...my, my, wouldn't it be nice if we had a case? It's been awhile, and I am anxious to follow the trail of some dastardly deeds.

HOLMES: Ha, ha. Good old Watson chomping at the bit so that she may once again learn from the master.

WATSON: *(Sarcastic.)* Oh, that's me...chomp, chomp, chomp.

HOLMES: Fret no more, my good friend, for my sleuthing intuition tells me a case is forthcoming.

WATSON: *(Skeptical.)* Really?

Case of the Missing Time

14

HOLMES: Listen! (*Sound of footsteps. She closes her eyes in dramatic concentration.*) Mrs. Hudson approaches.

WATSON: (*Unimpressed.*) That goes without saying.

HOLMES: She is accompanied by a man...mid to late 40s, wearing cowboy boots, most definitely American, and if I'm not mistaken, from the state of Texas.

WATSON: How could you—?

HOLMES: Elementary, my dear Watson, elementary. (*Hollers.*) Come in, Mrs. Hudson, and bring our guest.

(*Mrs. Hudson opens the door and enters with Big Tex, who is wearing a cowboy hat and boots.*)

HUDSON: How do you do that before I knock? (*To Watson.*) How does she do that?

HOLMES: Enough of your benign, menial questions. Introduce us to our... (*Looks at Watson, who is dumbfounded.*) ...guest, who is in his late 40s and wearing cowboy boots.

HUDSON: (*Offended.*) Menial? Why you... (*Glares at Holmes.*)

WATSON: (*Acts as mediator.*) Mrs. Hudson, whom do we have here?

(*Mrs. Hudson, who has been glaring at Holmes, turns to Watson.*)

HUDSON: This here bloke is Mr. Grissom, and he come to see her. (*Points to Holmes.*)

HOLMES: Mrs. Hudson, please take your uncouth self to the kitchen and bring us tea. Earl Grey will do.

HUDSON: (*Trying to keep her composure.*) One Earl Grey coming up, your highness. (*Aside.*) And I know where I'd like to put it.

WATSON: Thank you, Mrs. Hudson, that will be all.

(*Mrs. Hudson heads toward the exit.*)

Case of the Missing Time

16

HUDSON: (*Aside.*) Menial, uncouth...oh, one of these days...
(*Exits.*)

HOLMES: (*To Tex.*) My apologies for my maid's rudeness,
Mr. Grissom.

HUDSON: (*Hollers from offstage.*) Maid?! I ain't your maid.
I'm a housekeeper, like me mother and me mother's mother
before me!

HOLMES: Thank you for the history lesson. Now get me the
tea. Thank you! (*Sound of Mrs. Hudson's angry footsteps. To
Tex.*) Once again, my apologies.

TEX: No need for apologies, partner, at least yours speaks
English.

HOLMES: So, Mr. Grissom, how may I help you?

(*Tex gives Holmes a hard slap on the back. Holmes lets out a loud
painful groan.*)

TEX: Call me "Big Tex." Everyone does.

HOLMES: (*Still in pain but gloating to Watson.*) Well, Big Tex,
that must mean you're from Texas.

TEX: Sure does, the best and biggest state in the whole U-S of
A.

WATSON: Don't you mean second largest? I believe Alaska
is the largest, if I'm not mistaken.

TEX: (*Serious.*) No, in Texas, Alaska don't count. Heck, it
don't even touch the rest of us.

HOLMES: Mr. Grissom—

TEX: No, no, no, it's Tex. Big Tex. Big Tex Grissom.

HOLMES: (*Sarcastic.*) Of course, Tex. Big Tex. Big Tex
Grissom, allow me to introduce you to—

(*Tex places his arm around Watson.*)

TEX: No need. This, here, is Dr. Watson, great-granddaughter
of *the* Doctor Watson and right-hand sidekick of Shirley
Holmes, great niece of the world's greatest detective,

Case of the Missing Time

16

Sherlock Homes. (*Tex slaps Watson hard on the back. Watson lets out a loud groan.*) Howdy, Doc!

WATSON: (*In obvious pain.*) Howdy yourself, Big Tex.

TEX: I can't believe I'm in the presence of such related greatness. Tell me, I have to know...the woman who just left...is she related to the original Mrs. Hudson?

WATSON: Indeed, she is.

HOLMES: However, unlike her great-grandmother, she does not know her place and lacks any resemblance of gentility.

WATSON: You wouldn't change her for anyone, and you know it.

HOLMES: Whatever, Watson, whatever.

WATSON: Holmes is a traditionalist. She believes her great uncle wouldn't have it any other way.

HOLMES: Indeed. Well, Mr. Big Tex, I see you've done your homework. Now please share with us the reason for this rough... (*Rubs her back.*) ...intrusive visit.

TEX: I sure do like the way you people over here in England speak. You talk all fancy with big words I don't understand, but they sure are purty.

HOLMES: Yes, appearances, like shiny objects, tend to draw and befuddle one whose intellectual grappling of language is limited only by his lack of worldliness.

TEX: (*Laughs.*) Yooo-weee, woman, I don't know whether I should slap you or applaud.

HOLMES: (*Sarcastic laugh.*) Ha, ha, I thought as much. Please, have a seat and tell me what need you have of my talents.

WATSON: Yes, please do tell what needs you have for *our* talents?

(*Watson smiles at Holmes and sits. Tex sits.*)

TEX: Don't mind if I do take a load off. But first, if I may...Ms. Holmes, if you are a traditionalist, what's with the stick horn? I thought you —

HOLMES: (*Quickly.*) I don't do violins.

TEX: Whoa! Pull back on the reins there, little lady. I didn't mean to get your hackles up.

WATSON: Her hackles are lying in their proper place. She prefers the stick horn, as you put it, because...well, let's just say she prefers it—and not being able to conquer the challenge of a violin has nothing to do with it.

TEX: Too hard to handle, huh?

HOLMES: (*Insulted.*) I beg your pardon?

WATSON: Please, Big Tex, tell us a little about yourself and why you have come here.

TEX: Good. That's good, always find out about the person you're doin' business with. There are only three things you gotta know about Big Tex Grissom.

HOLMES: That he talks about himself in the third person?

TEX: Huh?

WATSON: And what would those three things be?

TEX: One, I'm honest and like honesty in a person. Two, I'm proud to be a Texan, and three, I'm so filthy rich it's almost embarrassing.

WATSON: Ah, oil.

TEX: No, not oil, although I do "dabble," as you folks like to say.

WATSON: Then it's cattle?

TEX: No, just a dabbler.

WATSON: Pray tell, what is it?

TEX: Are you ready for this?

HOLMES: This ought to be good.

TEX: Oh, it is...dot-coms.

HOLMES/WATSON: Dot-coms?

TEX: Yep. I had no idea what in tarnation they were, but I was told it was the future, so I sold everything I owned to get in on this wave of the future.

HOLMES: You sold everything you owned?

WATSON: A bit risky, old boy, wouldn't you say?

Case of the Missing Time

18

TEX: That's the fourth thing you should know about me—I've been known to take a risk, although circumstances dictated this risk.

WATSON: I should say it was a risk.

TEX: Oh, but I was a winner that time. I bought dumb and sold quick. Them boys didn't know what hit them.

HOLMES: Come in, Mrs. Hudson.

(Mrs. Hudson enters carrying a tray with a teapot and cups. She looks around and is dumbfounded at how Holmes knew she was there.)

HUDSON: *(To Watson.)* I got it, she looked through—

WATSON: No, Mrs. Hudson, not the keyhole.

HOLMES: Mrs. Hudson, my tea, if you please.

(Mrs. Hudson angrily sets the tray down.)

HUDSON: Here's your bloody Earl Grey. Hope you choke on it. *(Politely to Tex.)* Not you, sir, you're a gentleman and a guest. I'm referring to the ogre of whom I'm employed.

HOLMES: Yes, yes, Mrs. Hudson, you've made your point. Now off with you.

HUDSON: Oh, one of these days, lady, one of—

(Holmes gently shoves her toward the door.)

HOLMES: We get the point. Ta-ta. *(Mrs. Hudson exits in a huff mumbling to herself. Nonchalantly.)* Now where were we?

WATSON: The reason Big Tex is here.

HOLMES: I knew that. *(To Tex.)* Watson has a penchant for stating the obvious... *(To Watson.)* ...don't you, old girl?

WATSON: *(Sarcastic.)* Among other much-needed guidance, old girl.

HOLMES: Please, Big Tex, regale us with your story.

TEX: Huh?

WATSON: Tell us why you're here, sir, if you please.

(Tex looks at Holmes confused.)

TEX: Oh, right, right. Well, a few months back, I bought the Hamilton Manor up in Essex. My wife, Fanny, thought we needed some refinement.

HOLMES: *(Trying not to laugh.)* Your wife named Fanny thought you needed refinement? Why would she ever think that?

TEX: My thought exactly. Anywho, we looked around, and I found this Lord Hamilton fella was selling his homestead because he had fallen on hard times. So, like any good American, I saved his British bacon and bought his place lock, stock, and barrel.

HOLMES: *(Through a forced smile.)* How colonial of you.

WATSON: *(Quickly.)* And this Sir Hamilton has wronged you in some way. Is that why you're here?

TEX: No, no, he's a straight shooter for a Brit.

HOLMES: *(Biting her tongue.)* How nice of you to think so.

TEX: The problem is...ever since we moved in, I'm being robbed blind.

HOLMES: *(Interest peaked.)* Robbed, you say? Please continue.

TEX: Priceless artwork and them there tapestry things that hang on walls and look like rugs just vanish. Not to mention my Fanny's jewelry.

HOLMES: *(Having fun.)* Your Fanny wears jewelry?

TEX: My Fanny was made for jewelry.

HOLMES: Then one might say your Fanny glitters.

WATSON: Sir, what of security? Surely the manor is protected?

TEX: A Texas tick couldn't find a way in. I have cameras that cover every inch of the grounds and alarms. Yet somehow this thief takes the booty without being seen.

Case of the Missing Time

20

WATSON: Could it still be in the house somewhere, you know, stashed away?

TEX: Nope. I had private security look, and then I had security people check the security people. *(Hesitates.)* But, but there's more.

HOLMES: *(Intrigued, she rubs her hands together.)* Do tell. Do tell.

TEX: You'll think I'm loonier than a mesquite-eatin' one-legged Texas roadrunner.

(Confused, Holmes looks at Watson. Watson shrugs her shoulders.)

WATSON: Nooo, please continue.

TEX: Well, sometimes...sometimes I think we have one of them English ghosts you folks are always bragging about.

HOLMES: *(To Watson.)* This just keeps getting better.

WATSON: *(To Tex.)* Pray tell, sir, why would you think that?

TEX: About a week ago, I woke up and my Fanny was screaming.

HOLMES: *(Trying to hold her laughter.)* What would make your Fanny scream?

TEX: *(Serious.)* Ms. Holmes, there ain't nothing funny about my Fanny screaming.

WATSON: *(Trying not to laugh.)* No, of course not, but why was your...your wife, Fanny, screaming?

TEX: Our bedroom was in a shambles. Paintings missing and all the furniture either moved or turned over. I tell you, it was downright frightful.

WATSON: And you heard nothing?

TEX: Not a peep. It was as if time got lost. No one remembers falling asleep, only waking up to unusual happenings.

HOLMES: *(Excited.)* Sedatives, what about sedatives? Do you and your... *(Trying not to laugh.)* ...your Fanny use them?

WATSON: *(Surprised.)* Good question, Holmes.

HOLMES: *(Grins smugly.)* Of course it is.

Case of the Missing Time

21

TEX: No, never. But that wasn't the first time a room was disturbed like that. So you see, Ms. Holmes, I'm at the end of my Texas lasso. Can you help? *(Holmes looks at Watson.)* Money is no object.

HOLMES/WATSON: We'll do it!

TEX: Great! Look, this weekend we're having a little gathering of neighbors—just a friendly social we throw from time to time. Could you folks come up and stay for the weekend and do some snooping? My Fanny will be so relieved.

WATSON: *(Quickly before Holmes can react.)* We'll be there.

HOLMES: Consider your Fanny relieved.

(Holmes smiles smugly at Watson. Tex shakes their hands.)

TEX: Thank you both kindly. To tell you the truth, I wasn't sure what to expect. When I first got out of my car and waved to you, Ms. Holmes, you didn't wave back, and I thought you might be one of them stuck-up Brits.

WATSON: You waved at her?

TEX: Yeah, a big old Texas howdy do, right there at that window.

(Holmes realizes she has been found out. She turns her head and whistles. Watson goes to the "window" and points.)

WATSON: And that large limousine with the cattle horns on the grill is your car?

(Tex goes to Watson and puts his arm around her shoulder.)

TEX: *(Indicating car.)* She's a honey, ain't she?

WATSON: *(Looks at Holmes.)* There's no denying it's a Texas car, that's for sure.

(Holmes tries to rush Tex out.)

Case of the Missing Time

22

HOLMES: It's late, Big Tex, and I'm sure you can find your way out. We will see you this weekend.

TEX: (*Confused.*) Okay, ah, I guess I'll see ya'll then?

HOLMES: Right you are. Ta-ta.

TEX: Adios. (*Exits.*)

HOLMES: Not a word. (*Stomps several times on the floor and hollers.*) Mrs. Hudson!

WATSON: Elementary, indeed.

HOLMES: I said not a word. (*Stomps again and hollers.*) Mrs. Hudson!

WATSON: (*Sarcastic.*) What elementary need do we have with Mrs. Hudson?

HOLMES: I'm going to have her accompany us on our trip.

WATSON: (*Taken aback.*) What? Why?

HOLMES: If we are going to enter high society, it's only fitting we have a servant.

WATSON: Are you mad? She will never agree to that, and I, for one, would agree with her.

HOLMES: I'll pay her more.

WATSON: She's a housekeeper, not a maid.

HOLMES: Well, think of something or... (*Sees Mrs. Hudson approaching. Calls.*) Come in, Mrs. Hudson. (*To Watson.*) ...or I will.

(*Mrs. Hudson enters, angry.*)

HUDSON: You stomped, your highness?

HOLMES: Yes.

HUDSON: Do you know how much I hate that?

HOLMES: Yes, to be sure. Listen, I have a proposition for you.

HUDSON: If it involves more work, you can bloody shove it.

HOLMES: My, how you have a way with words. No, it involves more money.

Case of the Missing Time

23

(Mrs. Hudson folds her arms.)

HUDSON: *(Her interest is peeked.)* I'm listening...

HOLMES: I need you to accompany Watson and me on a case.

(Mrs. Hudson, taken aback, pauses.)

HUDSON: *(Excited.)* A case...me?

HOLMES: Yes, you.

HUDSON: In all the years of the Hudson housekeepers, we have never been asked on a case. I'm...I'm honored.

(Becomes suspicious.) Why me?

HOLMES: *(Matter-of-factly.)* I need a maid.

(Pause. Mrs. Hudson's anger builds.)

HUDSON: *(Yells.)* A maid?! Why, you pompous—

WATSON: *(Trying to smooth things out.)* She means a maid to go undercover.

HOLMES: I do?

WATSON: Yes, you do. Remember?

HOLMES: Oh, very well.

WATSON: We need an extra set of eyes and ears. This way we can know more about the staff—who may or may not be involved in this nefarious case.

HUDSON: Oooh, nefarious, is it? Tell me more...should I arm meself?

HOLMES: Oh, good grief.

WATSON: No, no, that won't be necessary. We will fill you in on the details later.

HUDSON: When do we leave?

WATSON: This weekend.

HUDSON: I'll have to get me a maid's outfit, won't I? I'll need a few quid, won't I?

HOLMES: What?

Case of the Missing Time

24

WATSON: That won't be a problem... *(Looks at Holmes.)*
...I'm sure a small stipend can be arranged.

HUDSON: *(Excited.)* You won't be sorry, Ms. Holmes. I'll do a fine job of seein' and hearin'.

HOLMES: *(Sarcastic.)* I can't tell you how relieved I am.

HUDSON: And I take back just about everything I said about you to the postman, the butcher, the neighbors—

HOLMES: I beg your pardon?

WATSON: *(Quickly.)* Off you go, Mrs. Hudson. I'll be in touch.

HUDSON: Right, right, you are. *(Winks at Holmes.)* See you later, partner. *(Exits whistling.)*

HOLMES: Partner? *(Hollers after her.)* You're a maid not a partner! I don't need a partner!

WATSON: *(Taken aback.)* What am I? Chopped liver?

HOLMES: Of course not. You're just Watson. *(Points to door.)*
And I believe we have just created a monster.

WATSON: Monster or not, you wanted her, and who knows, she may even be of assistance. Lord knows you may need it after all. I'm just Watson and not a partner.

HOLMES: Sour grapes don't become you, old girl.

WATSON: You know, Holmes, I have a mind to let you go this alone.

HOLMES: Oh, pish posh. You could no more stay away from a case than I. Now help me with a name for this case.

WATSON: You know me too well, Holmes, and for that I shall forever suffer. *(Matter-of-fact.)* "The Case of the Missing Time."

HOLMES: No, no, woman, think, think! *(Paces.)* I've got it! "Case of the Missing Time." Brilliant!

WATSON: What? But that was...I said...you took...

HOLMES: Quit your babbling, Watson. The game is afoot!

(Watson drops into a chair.)

Case of the Missing Time
25

WATSON: (*Aside.*) And I know where I'd like to put that foot.
(*Blackout.*)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: Parlor room of Hamilton Manor, mid-morning. Jeeves enters SR with Holmes and Watson.)

JEEVES: This way, ma'am.

WATSON: *(Looking around.)* Dear me, a most unusual décor.

HOLMES: I believe "unusual" does it justice. *(Walks around inspecting the room.)*

WATSON: One might describe it as eclectic or—

JEEVES: Trashy? Oh, did I say that? Dear me, my thoughts have popped out again.

HOLMES: Jeeves, is it?

JEEVES: Yes, ma'am, Jeeves it is.

HOLMES: Well, Jeeves, I believe you would be best suited in remembering your place and keeping your personal thoughts to yourself.

JEEVES: Yes, ma'am. Certainly, ma'am.

HOLMES: *(Hollers.)* Mrs. Hudson!

WATSON: I take it, Jeeves, you are displeased with your employment?

HOLMES: Watson, don't encourage a rebellious attitude with benign questions. *(Hollers.)* Mrs. Hudson!

WATSON: *(Aside to Holmes.)* Holmes, is it not our mission to ask questions, benign or otherwise?

HOLMES: Oh, right, right. Carry on. *(Hollers.)* Mrs. Hudson!

WATSON: Well, Jeeves?

JEEVES: To be blunt with you, ma'am, after years of loyal service to his lordship, Lord Hamilton... *(Becomes loud and animated.)* ...I was stabbed in the back, gutted like a pig on a spit, and tossed into a pit of despair. In other words, I was sold with the manor house to these cretins from Texas. *(Happy with himself.)*

WATSON: Most graphic in your anger, Jeeves.

HOLMES: Most boring and insubordinate, if you ask me.
Remember your station, Jeeves.

JEEVES: Yes, ma'am.

WATSON: Holmes, I don't think that was—

HOLMES: Hold that thought, old girl. My keen sense of hearing tells me Mrs. Hudson approaches. (*Annoyed.*) In here, Mrs. Hudson, if you please.

(Angry and exhausted, Mrs. Hudson enters SR, carrying many suitcases. She is dressed in a maid's outfit with a goofy white hat and support hose hanging down around her ankles.)

HUDSON: If you please. If you please! I'll tell you what would please me, you—

(Watson rushes to aid Mrs. Hudson.)

WATSON: Here, Mrs. Hudson, set the luggage down here and rest.

(Mrs. Hudson drops the luggage and falls onto a chair.)

HUDSON: What a bunch of crap. I didn't sign on to be her mule.

HOLMES: Watson, is it me, or is there a sense of revolt in the air by those who have forgotten... (*Raises one hand high and the other low.*) ...their rankings in life?

(Angry, Mrs. Hudson pushes her sleeves up and starts to stand.)

HUDSON: Oh, that's it.

(Watson gently pushes Mrs. Hudson back down.)

Case of the Missing Time

28

WATSON: (*Trying to smooth things over.*) Mrs. Hudson, I don't believe you've been formally introduced to the Grissom's family butler. Jeeves, this is Mrs. Hudson, our—

HOLMES: Maid.

WATSON: (*Quickly.*) Maid, yes, but we consider her more of a "partner" so to speak. Right, Holmes?

HOLMES: (*Reluctant.*) Whatever, Watson, whatever.

(*Jeeves takes Mrs. Hudson's hand and kisses it. Mrs. Hudson is taken aback and fans herself.*)

HUDSON: Oh my.

JEEVES: A pleasure, Mrs. Hudson. It is not often one meets a person who is considered her employer's equal.

HOLMES: I beg your pardon?

WATSON: Not now, Holmes. Don't we have business to attend to?

HOLMES: Fine. Jeeves, please let your master know we are here.

JEEVES/HUDSON: (*Angry.*) Master?

WATSON: (*Getting tired of refereeing.*) She means—"employer," "boss," "head honcho"—whatever it is you call Mr. Grissom.

JEEVES: First, allow me to attend to your baggage. (*Speaks into his watch.*) Miss La Plume, please report to the parlor.

HOLMES: Watson, that man just spoke to his watch.

JEEVES: Yes, ma'am, I did. My employer, Mr. Gadget— (*To Watson.*) —that's one of the many names I call the Texas Tycoon—has a thing for electronics. (*To Mrs. Hudson.*) It's a way to keep tabs on the little people.

(*Mrs. Hudson raises a clenched fist.*)

HUDSON: I hear you, brother.

(Disheveled and out of breath, La Plume enters upstage left. She curtsies to Holmes and Watson.)

LA PLUME: You radioed, Jeeves?

JEEVES: Let me guess...Helga is on a break, and you were entertaining the children?

LA PLUME: *(Almost in tears.)* Monsieur, they are not children. They are zee spawn of zee devil. *(Grabs his arm.)* Please, I beg of you, do not send me back.

HOLMES: Devil, you say? Is there devil-worshipping going on? Watson, the plot it thickens.

WATSON: No, Holmes, she meant...oh, forget it.

JEEVES: Miss LaPlume, this is Mrs. Hudson. She is partner to Ms. Holmes and Dr. Watson. Please help her with the luggage and get her settled in.

HOLMES: Miss LaPlume, Mrs. Hudson is our maid, not our partner, and she would be wise to remember that.

(Mrs. Hudson stands.)

HUDSON: *(To LaPlume.)* Come along, sweetie, you can show me around. *(To Jeeves.)* The people will be heard... *(Raises her fist.)* ...right, brother?

JEEVES: *(Confused, he makes a half-hearted fist.)* Right...sister?

(Mrs. Hudson picks up the luggage.)

HUDSON: Come on, Frenchy.

(LaPlume grabs her luggage.)

LAPLUME: Oui.

WATSON: Mrs. Hudson? *(Takes her aside.)* Remember, keep your eyes and ears open and report anything unusual.

HUDSON: *(Looks around.)* You're kidding?

WATSON: Just be careful. Go.

Case of the Missing Time

30

HUDSON: Lead the way, LaPlume, we got some maidin' to do. *(Laughs.)*

(LaPlume starts to exit up left and then stops.)

LAPLUME: Wait, we will take a detour away from zee devils. Zhis way. *(Exits SR.)*

HUDSON: Oooo, cloak and dagger. Now you're talking. *(Exits SR.)*

HOLMES: Watson?

WATSON: I know...monster.

JEEVES: Please make yourselves comfortable. *(Animated and talks like Texan.)* Mr. and Mrs. Big Tex are out on the lawn with the other buckaroos. I'll just rustle them on up and return in a Texas minute. *(Starts to exit SL.)*

HOLMES: Jeeves, I find your attitude appalling.

JEEVES: This is what 30 years of loyal service has done to me, ma'am. It is simply a reflection of my life, and I am but a bitter butler. *(Exits SL.)*

HOLMES: Watson, I don't care for that man's demeanor. I believe I will speak of it to Mr. Grissom.

WATSON: It also presents cause for retribution...perhaps thievery?

HOLMES: Oh how cliché..."the butler did it." Well, we shall see, Watson. We shall see.

WATSON: *(Looking around.)* I can't say much for the Grissom's taste in decorating.

HOLMES: It's appalling in its nature. It's like the old west meets jolly old England.

WATSON: Tell me, Holmes, what do you think of the maid LaPlume?

HOLMES: She's French. What's there to think?

WATSON: That aside, she was in fear of the Grissoms' children.

HOLMES: Yes, and let us not forget the devil worshipping.

Case of the Missing Time

31

WATSON: No, Holmes, she was referring to the devilish children.

HOLMES: Exactly. Remember, devil worshipping comes in all forms.

WATSON: Yes, but—

(Lil Sue runs in upstage left carrying a book.)

LIL SUE: *(Yells teasingly.)* I'm telling Pa! I'm telling Pa!

(Lil Tex enters, chasing her.)

LIL TEX: Give me that book, you little witch!

(Lil Tex and Lil Sue run around Watson and Holmes, who are taken aback and stop on opposite sides of them.)

LIL SUE: When he finds out you're reading this stuff, he is gonna strap you good.

LIL TEX: If you know what's good for you, you'll shut your trap or—

LIL SUE: Or what? You'll put a curse on me? *(Holmes grabs the book away from Lil Sue. To Holmes.)* Hey!

HOLMES: *(Reads title.)* "Warlocks and Witches: The Complete Guide." Watson, it's now devilry and witchery.

LIL SUE: Give me that back, you old bag!

LIL TEX: Give it to me, if you know what's good for you.

WATSON: Now, now, there is no need for threats.

LIL TEX: Kiss off, [Judge Judy]. No one asked for your opinion. *[Or insert the name of another popular TV judge.]*

LIL SUE: You tell her, Lil Tex.

LIL TEX: Shut up, you twit, and don't call me that. I told you from now on I'm Agon.

HOLMES: Well, Agon, has anyone ever told you you're both obnoxious brats with the manners of gutter snipes?

LIL TEX: Has anyone ever told you you're ugly?

WATSON: (*Firm.*) That will be enough, young man, I—

(*Helga enters upstage left.*)

HELGA: (*Hollers.*) Children!

(*Helga is firm, brash, and tough. Children stop in fear and stand at attention.*)

CHILDREN: Yes, Nanny Helga?

(*Helga marches firmly to them.*)

WATSON: Are you in charge of—?

HELGA: Quiet! (*To Children.*) What is all this racket I hear?
You sound like Hesson's on holiday, and I will not have it.
Explain.

HOLMES: I believe I could best—

HELGA: Was I talking to you? I wasn't talking to you.
(*Quickly gets in the Children's faces.*) Explain!

LIL SUE: (*Almost in tears.*) We, we, we, we—

HELGA: (*Mocking.*) We, we, we! Speak up!

LIL TEX: (*Talks sweet and innocent.*) Nanny Helga, we were
playing a game called "book tag" — as we often do as loving
brother and sister — when this mean and obviously *ugly* lady
grabbed our book and made us cry.

(*Quickly, Lil Tex and Lil Sue hide behind Helga and give a thumbs-up to each other.*)

HOLMES: Why, I never...

HELGA: Is this true...you make my little leibchens cry?

WATSON: Don't be preposterous. The little urchins are lying.

HELGA: (*Speaks slow and threatening.*) I have ways of finding
out, you know...

HOLMES: Madame, I will not stand here and be threatened by the likes—

(Big Tex enters SL.)

BIG TEX: Well, howdy, folks. I'm glad ya'll could make it. *(Puts arms around Children.)* I see you've met my younguns Lil Sue and Lil Tex. Ain't they something?

HOLMES: Yes, *some things* come to mind.

BIG TEX: *(Indicating Helga.)* And this here lovely lady is our nanny, Fräulein Helga. Helga, this here is none other than the famous detective Shirley Homes, and of course, the always present Dr. Watson.

HELGA: *(Suspicious.)* Yes, we've met.

BIG TEX: Helga, why don't you take the younguns and freshen up for lunch. Fanny will be here shortly with the rest of the guests.

HELGA: As you wish, Big Tex. *(Hollers.)* Children! *(Holmes and Watson jump. Lil Tex and Lil Sue snap to attention. Lil Tex grabs the book away from Holmes.)* Ready? March! *(Lil Tex and Lil Sue march out in single file.)* Left, right—one, two! Ready? Double-time! One, two, three, four—

(They exit up left.)

BIG TEX: *(All proud.)* There goes two of the sweetest little heifers that ever rode the prairie.

WATSON: Heifers, you say? Their nanny is something, that's for certain.

HOLMES: Gestapo comes to mind.

BIG TEX: She's a good one all right.

WATSON: Good? The woman is a twisted tyrant with leanings toward world domination.

BIG TEX: *(Smiling and gazing off.)* And that's why I had to have her.

HOLMES: (*Aside to Watson.*) Oh, this should be priceless. (*To Tex.*) Pray tell, sir, explain yourself.

BIG TEX: Have you ever heard of the TV show, “Nanny Help Us, Our Kids Are Wicked and Deranged”?

HOLMES: Happily, no.

BIG TEX: Well, it was a big hit, and when I saw Nanny Helga for the first time, I was looking at an exact copy of my ma.

WATSON: You poor man.

BIG TEX: No, no, it was like visiting my past. You may not be able to tell now, but my younguns used to be a handful.

HOLMES: “Children of the Damned” had crossed my mind.

BIG TEX: I saw Ma—I mean Helga—and I had to have her for my children’s sake. So I bought the show, cancelled it, and kept the nanny.

HOLMES: How opulent of you.

WATSON: And Nanny Helga was all right with this?

BIG TEX: No, but just like any wild filly, she’ll be tamed, and the money don’t hurt none. Now what’s holding up my Fanny? (*Signals for them to wait and exits SL.*)

WATSON: Another disgruntled employee, Holmes. The list of suspects grows.

HOLMES: How so, Watson? I’m missing your point.

WATSON: More disgruntled employees means more reasons for the thefts.

HOLMES: I’m sorry. Zip... (*Motions with hand.*) ...straight over the head.

WATSON: (*Losing patience.*) The missing paintings and tapestries could have been taken by an angry employee.

(*Pause.*)

HOLMES: Watson, it’s been my experience that employees with grudges often take it out on employers.

WATSON: (*Stunned.*) But that’s what I just said.

HOLMES: Right, whatever you say. And let us not forget the children.

WATSON: But they can't be more than ten and 12. I don't think—

HOLMES: Exactly, that's why I do the thinking.

WATSON: (*Frustrated.*) Whatever, Holmes, whatever.

(*Big Tex enters.*)

BIG TEX: They're coming now, and I can't wait for you to meet my Fanny.

(*Watson looks over at Holmes, who has a smirk on her face.*)

WATSON: (*To Holmes.*) Don't even think it.

BIG TEX: Oh, that reminds me... (*Tex puts his arms around their shoulders and hands each a watch.*) Here, you must wear these at all times. With all that's going on, we can communicate at any time. Everyone is wearing one. It's the neatest little thing. It can tell body temp, pulse, make phone calls...heck, it can even take videos. Just push here... (*Indicates.*) ...if you want to call me or Dr. Watson, whoever. Just push and say their name.

(*Fanny enters SL with Lady Thornton, Sir Henry, Lady Thomas, and Glenda Monroe. Glenda is always touching her watch and secretly videotaping things.*)

FANNY: This way, ya'll, this way. (*To Tex.*) We're back darlin'!

(*Lady Thornton and Glenda Monroe sit at the game table. Sir Henry and Lady Thomas sit on chairs. Big Tex gives Fanny a hug.*)

BIG TEX: So you are, my little Texas twister. Ms. Holmes, Dr. Watson, I want you to meet—

(*Fanny's cell phone rings.*)

Case of the Missing Time

36

FANNY: I'm sorry, sugar, I must take this. (*Into phone.*)
Hello?

BIG TEX: (*To others.*) Fanny is always busy on the phone with
charity business.

FANNY: (*Into phone.*) There are 100,000 reasons...Yes, I bet.

(*Big Tex approaches Sir Henry and Lady Thomas.*)

BIG TEX: (*To Holmes and Watson.*) Come on over and meet the
other folks. (*To Sir Henry and Lady Thomas.*) Folks, I'd like
you to meet the world-famous detective, Ms. Shirley
Holmes, and her shadow, Dr. Watson.

WATSON: (*Aside.*) Now I'm a shadow.

BIG TEX: This here fella is one of our fancy friends, Sir Henry
Thomas.

HENRY: So you're here to find the thief –

BIG TEX: Or ghost.

HENRY: Yes, well, it's about time. I can't abide thievery.
Every time I'm here, something bizarre happens, and I can't
abide bizarre.

FANNY: (*Into phone.*) Yes, darlin', let me know. Bye. (*Hangs
up and sits on the couch.*)

WATSON: (*To Sir Henry.*) And you say it happens every time
you're here?

HENRY: Yes.

WATSON: And it's bizarre, you say?

HENRY: Yes. (*To Holmes.*) What's wrong with her? Can't she
hear?

HOLMES: She hears fine, Sir Henry. She just likes to talk.

WATSON: (*Offended.*) Why, I never...

HOLMES: Tell me, Sir Henry, what do you find bizarre?

HENRY: Bizarre is going to bed in one room and waking up
in the courtyard fountain wearing nothing but your birthday
suit. Can't abide bizarre. Birthday suit...most
embarrassing.

(Big Tex, Fanny, Lady Thomas, Lady Thornton, and Glenda Monroe adlib their disgust at the sight.)

FANNY: I didn't know a body could wrinkle like that.

HENRY: Point taken. Thank you.

BIG TEX: It was like looking at a naked Montgomery Burns character.

LADY THOMAS: Try being married to it.

HENRY: Could we get past my wrinkles, if you please?

LADY THOMAS: *(Disillusioned.)* I've tried.

(LaPlume enters, carrying a tea tray. Mrs. Hudson enters. LaPlume goes around offering tea to the guests while Mrs. Hudson plops down at the gaming table. Holmes is dismayed at Mrs. Hudson's behavior.)

HUDSON: *(Introducing herself.)* Hi. I'm with them. *(Indicates Watson and Holmes.)*

HOLMES: She is not with us. She is our maid. *(To Mrs. Hudson.)* Don't you have some maid thing to do?

HUDSON: *(Firm.)* I'm on break. *(Smiles. To others.)* Carry on.

BIG TEX: Holmes, say howdy to Sir Henry's wife, Lady Thomas.

HOLMES: Lady Thomas.

LADY THOMAS: That's me, the wife. Can life get any better? Henry, I'm bored. Do we have to stay the entire weekend?

HENRY: Now, sweet cakes, I told you it was important we spend time with our new best American friends.

LADY THOMAS: *(Enjoying this.)* Oh, that's right. You said they could—

HENRY: *(Nervous laugh.)* Could use our help solving this thievery business.

FANNY: That is right friendly of you, Henry.

BIG TEX: Darlin', over here they like their fancy names. It's Sir Henry.

FANNY: Oh, pooh! Friends don't call friends "sir." Right, Hen?

HENRY: *(Forces a smile.)* Right...Fan.

(Fanny playfully hits Big Tex on the stomach.)

FANNY: *(To Big Tex.)* See?

WATSON: Tell me, Lady Thomas, has anything bizarre happened to you?

(Lady Thomas looks at Henry then back to Watson.)

LADY THOMAS: If you mean other than the obvious—and if you mean waking up in a suit of medieval armor is bizarre—then yes.

WATSON: Yes, that would fall under "bizarre," now wouldn't it?

HOLMES: And you have no idea how this happened?

LADY THOMAS: If I did, we wouldn't need you, now would we? World famous, indeed...

HUDSON: Ha! I like her.

LADY THOMAS: *(To Holmes.)* Does your underling always speak when not spoken to?

HOLMES: My apologizes, Lady...

HUDSON: I take it back. Lady Hoity-Toity, I don't like you.

WATSON: *(Quickly points at Glenda.)* Tell me, Big Tex, who is that woman? She looks familiar.

BIG TEX: As she should, Dr. Watson. *(Approaches Glenda.)* This here beauty is none other than the actress Glenda Monroe.

HUDSON: *(Excited.)* I thought that was you! Miss Monroe, I'm your biggest fan!

GLENDA: Please, call me Glennie.

HUDSON: The girlies ain't gonna believe this.

HOLMES: *(Sarcastic.)* Now would be a good time to tell them.

HUDSON: (*Ignores Holmes.*) I loved you in "Paris Love" and "Love in New York" and "I Love to Love" and your last one "Luna Craft Pygmy Queen."

GLENDA: (*Embarrassed.*) Yes, well thank you.

HUDSON: Although I could never figure out if you were the pygmy queen. How come you were so much bigger than the other pygmies?

WATSON: I think that's enough praise, Mrs. Hudson.

HUDSON: Okay, just one more. (*To Glenda.*) How come you ain't done any movies lately? I mean, your commercials for female baldness are okay, but there ain't no action or lovey-dovey stuff.

GLENDA: (*Losing it.*) I decided to take a break, okay? I'm still marketable...you'll see. You'll all see.

HUDSON: Geez, lighten up.

HOLMES: My apologies for my servant, Miss Monroe. She is both nosey and uncouth... (*Looks at Mrs. Hudson.*) ...and doesn't realize you don't kick a has-been when she's down. (*Glenda wails loudly.*) What?

BIG TEX: You gals have a peculiar way of questioning.

(*Big Tex sits beside Fanny on the couch. Watson pats Miss Monroe's shoulder to comfort her.*)

WATSON: Miss Monroe, have you had anything bizarre happen to you here?

LADY THOMAS: Besides you three showing up?

WATSON: Touché, Lady Thomas. Miss Monroe?

GLENDA: Yes.

WATSON: And?

GLENDA: I don't want to say.

WATSON: Please, it can only help.

GLENDA: (*With difficulty.*) I woke up...

(*Pause. Others lean forward to hear.*)

Case of the Missing Time

40

WATSON: Yes, you woke up and...

GLENDA: I woke up dancing and...and holding a spear and... *(Cries.)* ...I was dressed like a pygmy.

HUDSON: Ha!

(Mrs. Hudson quickly covers her mouth. Others try not to laugh. Fanny's phone rings.)

FANNY: Excuse me, another charity. *(Into phone.)*
Hello...Yes, if we place 25,000 tickets on sale, I'm sure we'll be a winner...Yes, bye. *(To others.)* Sorry.

WATSON: Let me get this straight...these bizarre robberies happened when you were all present?

LADY THORNTON: Each and every time. Strange, isn't it?

WATSON: And you are?

BIG TEX: Allow me. Lady Thornton this is—

LADY THORNTON: *(Matter-of-fact.)* The world famous Shirley Holmes and Dr. Watson. How exhilarating. I feel safer already.

BIG TEX: *(In awe.)* Lady Thornton is a world traveler and lived in the Far East. Ain't that right, sugar?

LADY THORNTON: Yes, Big Tex, that is true.

FANNY: Lady Thornton's spread is just over yonder. *(Indicates.)* We're neighbors.

LADY THORNTON: Yes, we are, Fanny. Our..."spreads" are adjoining.

(The following exchange is faced paced and makes no sense.)

HOLMES: Then you are a connoisseur of tea.

LADY THORNTON: I beg your pardon.

HOLMES: If you truly spent time in the Far East, then you would know your teas.

LADY THORNTON: If one chose to learn of such things, yes.

HOLMES: Did you, learn, I mean?

LADY THORNTON: *(Looking confused.)* No.

Case of the Missing Time

41

HOLMES: Aha!

LADY THORNTON: What aha?

WATSON: (*Covering up for Holmes.*) Sometimes Holmes' questions are obscure, but believe me, they have significant meaning. (*Confused, looks to Holmes.*) Right, Holmes?

HOLMES: Yes, yes, yes. Tell me, Lady Thornton, have you lived around here long?

LADY THORNTON: My family goes back generations, Ms. Holmes. I'm sure almost as far back as yours.

BIG TEX: Lady Thornton was the one who suggested we rustle you good folks to help us with this thievery. She is right neighborly.

LADY THORNTON: You're too kind, Big Tex. Ms. Holmes and Dr. Watson are widely known. I thought you would want only the best.

HOLMES: Of course he would.

WATSON: Thank you for those kind words, Lady Thornton. I take it you have been witness to these bizarre happenings?

LADY THORNTON: Why, yes, I have, but if you don't mind, I prefer to keep them to myself.

LADY THOMAS: What? You're too good to tell us?

LADY THORNTON: No, dear, it's just that there are some things a lady doesn't care to share, but then again, you wouldn't know about that, would you?

LADY THOMAS: Why you...

LADY THORNTON: You're a lady, Fanny. You understand.

FANNY: (*Surprised.*) Me? Oh, yes, yes, I do. Ladies do like their privacy.

(Big Tex stands.)

BIG TEX: Where are my manners? Ms. Holmes, Dr. Watson, this here vision of Texas beauty is my wife, Fanny. Fanny, these good folks are going to solve our thieven' problems.

(Fanny stands.)

Case of the Missing Time

42

FANNY: Well, howdy, partners... *(Puts her arms out and comically waves her hands and arms to come get a hug.)* ...give us a big ol' Texas hug.

(Holmes and Watson are taken aback and just stand there.)

BIG TEX: Don't be shy. In Texas, everyone gives my Fanny a big ol' hug.

HUDSON: *(Enjoying it.)* Yeah, Holmes, don't be shy. Give his Fanny a big ol' hug.

(Holmes shoves Watson toward Fanny. Fanny squeezes Watson hard and lifts her off her feet. Watson lets out a groan.)

FANNY: Pleasure to meet ya there, doc.

HUDSON: Holmes, his Fanny awaits...

HOLMES: *(To Mrs. Hudson.)* Oh, how I long for the days of your ancestors.

(Holmes awkwardly holds her arms out to Fanny and closes her eyes.)

FANNY: Come here, girl, I won't bite. *(She yanks Holmes in and hugs her hard.)* Now that's what you call a Texas hug.

HOLMES: *(Holds her back in pain.)* How bear-like of you.

BIG TEX: Ain't she the greatest?

(Fanny hits Big Tex on the chest.)

FANNY: Oh, Big Tex, stop it. *(Sits on the couch.)*

BIG TEX: I will not. I'm proud of my Fanny. *(Stands behind Fanny on the couch.)* In fact, the whole world should know the pleasure of hugging my Fanny.

LADY THOMAS: *(To Henry.)* Please make him stop.

HENRY: I like hugging his Fanny.

LADY THOMAS: *(Looks up.)* Why me?

Case of the Missing Time

43

(Jeeves enters up left.)

JEEVES: *(Announces.)* Excuse me! Chow is now being served... *(He closes his eyes. With reluctance.)* ...in the mess hall. *(Others look at him strangely. Dignified.)* Those are Big Tex's word, not mine. So...so please... *(Acts like he's mounting a horse.)* ...saddle up and follow me, buckaroos.

BIG TEX: Yeee-haaa! *(Slaps Jeeves on back.)* That a boy, Jeeves, spoken like a cowboy.

JEEVES: *(Aside.)* Oh, how my life sucks. *(Turns and exits up left.)*

FANNY: C'mon, ya'll, it's chow time.

(Henry stands.)

HENRY: It's about time. I'm starved. *(To Lady Thomas.)* Will you cut my meat, Poopsie?

(Lady Thomas pauses and then turns toward the door.)

LADY THOMAS: Jeeves, would your misery like company?

(Lady Thomas exits and Henry follows.)

LAPLUME: This way, Lady Thornton.

LADY THORNTON: Thank you, LaPlume, I know my way.

LAPLUME: *(Curtsies.)* Oui, Madame. *(Exits.)*

LADY THORNTON: Shall we, Glennie?

GLENDA: *(Worried about her weight.)* I suppose a nibble of much needed nourishment won't add an inch.

(They exit.)

FANNY: Ms. Homes, Dr. Watson, it's chow time. Gotta keep up our strength for tonight's party.

Case of the Missing Time

44

HOLMES: (*Sarcastic.*) You go along, Fanny, we'll be there in two bites of a tick.

BIG TEX: Suit yourself, but I warn you, don't be long 'cause I'm so hungry I could eat the rear flank of a steer.

(Big Tex and Fanny exit.)

HOLMES: (*Aside.*) Yet another Fanny reference. (*Sits on the couch.*)

WATSON: What do you think, Holmes?

(Watson sits on a chair. Mrs. Hudson comes over and sits on a chair.)

HUDSON: I think the whole bloody bunch is daft.

HOLMES: Why are you talking, Mrs. Hudson?

HUDSON: Well, pardon me, your highness. I guess I know my place.

HOLMES: No, no, you don't, or you wouldn't have plopped yourself down and rudely interrupted a conversation between lords and ladies.

HUDSON: So what you're sayin' is I ain't good enough to talk to the high and mighty?

HOLMES: By George, I think the servant's got it.

HUDSON: (*Insulted.*) That's it. I'm bloody out of here. I got me dignity.

(Mrs. Hudson starts to exit. Watson gets up and stops her.)

WATSON: Wait, Mrs. Hudson, your part here is invaluable.

(Mrs. Hudson stops and slowly turns.)

HUDSON: Really?

WATSON: Yes, right. Holmes? (*Pause.*) Right, Holmes?

HOLMES: Fine. Right. You're needed.

Case of the Missing Time

45

HUDSON: (*Happy.*) That's more like it, gov.

(*Mrs. Hudson sits. Watson sits.*)

WATSON: Have you found out anything?

HUDSON: Yeah, LaPlume is a bloomin' idiot.

HOLMES: (*To Watson.*) And I'm paying her for this inept analysis?

WATSON: Anything else, Mrs. Hudson?

HUDSON: (*Looks smugly. To Holmes.*) Yeah, I got something else...she be a lousy servant. (*To Holmes.*) So there, fanny hugger.

HOLMES: Floor mopper!

WATSON: Point taken, ladies.

HOLMES: She started it.

HUDSON: No, I didn't.

WATSON: Ladies, please. Mrs. Hudson, try and find out more about the domestics before tonight's party. It's imperative.

HUDSON: I'll do it for you, doc.

HOLMES: (*Sarcastic.*) Oh, that hurt.

WATSON: Holmes, if I may suggest, what say we use the same strategy as the "Parlor Murder's Case"? (*Holds up watch.*) We have the technology available.

HOLMES: Capital idea. I was just going to suggest that.

HUDSON: No, you weren't.

HOLMES: Yes, I was.

WATSON: (*Exasperated.*) Ladies, please. Look, we have more than enough suspects, so what say we concentrate on the problem at hand and do our ancestors proud?

HOLMES: Fine.

HUDSON: Fine.

WATSON: Good show. Now, I may miss the dinner party. I'm going back to London for some research, so steady on and keep eyes and ears open. I assume that's what you were going to suggest, Holmes?

Case of the Missing Time

46

HOLMES: Of course it was. Now I'm famished and could use a spot of lunch. *(Rises.)* Shall we?

(Mrs. Hudson rises.)

HUDSON: Yeah, I could stuff me face. I'm starved.

HOLMES: Not you. You go to the kitchen with the rest of the domestics.

(Mrs. Hudson starts to exit.)

HUDSON: *(Under her breath.)* One of these days, woman...one of these days... *(Exits.)*

(Holmes starts to exit.)

HOLMES: That day will never come...servant. *(Exits up left.)*

WATSON: *(Aside.)* If this works, it will be a miracle.

(Blackout. Intermission.)

[END OF FREEVIEW]