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# BAKER STREET IRREGULARS

By FLIP KOBLER and CINDY MARCUS

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FINNEGAN (M)</td>
<td>Irish born newsie; in it for the money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALASKA (F)</td>
<td>Cowgirl with an attitude and a chip on her shoulder; Western accent</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHOEBE (F)</td>
<td>Lady-like Miss Manners of her generation</td>
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<tr>
<td>QUINN (F)</td>
<td>Youngest Irregular; a pixie with a ravenous curiosity</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIGGINS (M)</td>
<td>Leader of the Irregulars; admires Sherlock Holmes and wants to be just like him</td>
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<tr>
<td>LESTRADE (M)</td>
<td>Inert Scotland Yard detective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFFICER WILKES (M or F)</td>
<td>Police officer with a Cockney accent too thick to be understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFFICER PELHAM (M or F)</td>
<td>Another police officer eager to do his/her duty; translator for the unintelligible Wilkes</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAINWRIGHT (M)</td>
<td>Owner and ringmaster of the circus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELZA (F)</td>
<td>Wainwright’s daughter; smart, kind and capable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JINGLES (M or F)</td>
<td>Clown apprentice who’s not fond of clowning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRANK (M or F)</td>
<td>Clown apprentice who loves clowning as long as somebody else gets smacked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIPER (F)</td>
<td>Lead animal trainer apprentice; kind to the animals and overly protective of them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FESS (M)</td>
<td>Animal trainer apprentice; hates playing second fiddle to Piper and hates working for girls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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DIGGER (F)................................ loves her job cleaning up the animal muck 28

ZOLDA (F).............................. Gypsy fortune teller apprentice who Takes her “gift” seriously; has an Eastern European accent 43

HAWKER (M or F)....................... food hawker who could sell ice to Eskimos 45

BLYTHE (F)................................ French lead acrobat apprentice; dainty and obsessed about her looks 44

TARA (F)............................... smallest acrobat apprentice; doesn’t understand French 33

CHARITY (F)........................... another acrobat apprentice who’s happy as Blythe’s “Oui” girl; fakes a French accent 33

EXTRAS ................................ as additional circus members as needed

SETTING

The year is 1897. The action Takes place on the grounds of the Wainwright Circus in London.

NOTE: Scene breaks are indicated for rehearsal purpose only. Action should flow continuously. You can add an intermission between acts, if desired.

SET DESCRIPTION

A large placard reads, “Wainwright Circus.” There are colorful banners and maybe an old fashioned small circus tent or two. A bench and a few barrels or crates complete the look.
BAKER STREET IRREGULARS

ACT ONE
Scene One

LIGHTS UP in front of the closed curtain. ALASKA crouches STAGE LEFT, twirling a rope. FINNEGAN ENTERS RIGHT, hawking his newspapers. He’s a street urchin but wears a decent hat or cap.

FINNEGAN: Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Circus performer dies in the middle of a big show! Was it an accident or was it murder? Get your papers and read all about it! (To ALASKA.) Hey, boyo, do you want a paper? It’s a story of mystery and intrigue! (ALASKA doesn’t respond.) Do you hear me talkin’ to you? Hey! Boyo!

ALASKA: (Jumps to her feet, grabs FINNEGAN by the lapels and gets in his face.) Say it again. Call me a boy again. I dare you.

FINNEGAN: Blimey, Alaska, I didn’t know it were you. What are you doin’ here, then? (Playfully swats her away.)

ALASKA: I got the call.

FINNEGAN: The call? What call?

ALASKA: You didn’t get the call?

FINNEGAN: No, or I’d know what call, wouldn’t I?

ALASKA: So no call?

FINNEGAN: Am I not makin’ that clear?

ALASKA: So what are you doin’ here?

FINNEGAN: Sellin’ papers. I get a farthin’ for every hundred I sell.

ALASKA: Oh, you’re a regular Vanderbilt.

FINNEGAN: That’s right. I’m gonna be a rich man, me. A little jingle in me pocket and coin in the bank. I ain’t gonna be a poor orphan me whole life. I’ll be respected. People’ll look up to me.

PHOEBE: (ENTERS with QUINN, panting and out of breath.) We came as soon as we got the call.

QUINN: Where’s Wiggins? What time is it? Are we late?

ALASKA: Nah, Wiggins ain’t here yet. Looks like you two got all sweaty for nuthin’.

PHOEBE: A lady does not sweat. She glows.

ALASKA: Yeah, well, you’re glowin’ like a horse.

PHOEBE: At least I have the manners to bathe once in a while.

ALASKA: I done took a bath last Saturday. I ain’t no princess that’s gotta take me a bubbly bath every week.

QUINN: What’s a bubbly bath?

PHOEBE: (To ALASKA, fans the air in front of her nose.) It’s not the smell so much, it’s the burning in my eyes.
ALASKA: Am I offendin’ your senses? I didn’t know you was such a lace doily.

QUINN: What’s a doily?

ALASKA: A frail, nuthin’ little rag that don’t serve no purpose.

PHOEBE: (To QUINN like a patient teacher.) A doily protects your beloved things from abuse and scratches, all while adding beauty to your home.

QUINN: Can I be a doily?

PHOEBE: (Puts arm around QUINN.) Of course you can.

ALASKA: Dadgum! (ALL smile and laugh. These are old friends. ALASKA Punches PHOEBE on the shoulder.) How you been Phoebe?

PHOEBE: Very well. And ow! We haven’t seen you at the orphanage.

ALASKA: Naw. I’m better off on my own. Livin’ by my wits.

FINNEGAN: Probably why you’re starvin’.

ALASKA: That was like a joke.

PHOEBE: Without actually being funny.

WIGGINS: (ENTERS.) Good, you all got the call.

FINNEGAN: What call?

QUINN: Wiggins!

(WIGGINS hugs, pats on the back and shoulder slugs.)

GOOD: What call?!

PHOEBE: Wiggins hung the red cloth outside 221 Baker Street.

FINNEGAN: I didn’t see it.

ALASKA: That’s cause you was too busy makin’ your fortune.

FINNEGAN: One farthin’ at a time, boyo!

ALASKA: Hey!

FINNEGAN: Lass. I meant lass.

PHOEBE: Make another joke about me. I dare you. (Slaps PHOEBE with her cowboy hat.)

PHOEBE: Don’t wrinkle the dress, please and thank you.

QUINN: Why are we here? Huh? How come and why?

WIGGINS: Well, Sherlock Holmes, the world’s greatest detective, needs our help on another case. (ALL gasps in excitement.)

QUINN: Is it an important case? Is it a big case? Is it dangerous? Does it involve octopuses?

WIGGINS: No, Quinn.
1 QUINN: So when do we start? What do we do? How do we do it?
WIGGINS: We are Mr. Holmes’s eyes and ears on the street. Junior detectives you might say. *(Pulls out a large magnifying glass and displays it proudly.)*

5 FINNEGAN: Wow! Where’d you get that?
WIGGINS: I bought it. It’s just like the one Mr. Holmes uses.
FINNEGAN: Must’ve cost a bleedin’ fortune.
WIGGINS: Every penny I ever had.
FINNEGAN: Never get rich that way, Wiggins.

10 WIGGINS: I don’t care about the money.
FINNEGAN: Hey. Hey! Don’t talk like that. Blasphemy that is.
WIGGINS: Besides, Mr. Holmes has promised us a shillin’ each.
IRREGULARS: Each?!
WIGGINS: And half a crown for whoever solves the crime.

15 FINNEGAN: Half a crown?! Blast! I’m in. *(Tosses newspapers over his shoulder.)*

ALASKA: Professor Moriarty ain’t involved, is he? That evil genius gives me the willies.
WIGGINS: I shouldn’t think so. Not on this case.

QUINN: What are the willies? And why are they called willies? Why aren’t they called “bills?” Or “Sir Williams?”

PHOEBE: Where are we going?
WIGGINS: *(As IRREGULARS EXIT LEFT.)* You are goin’ to love this. We’re goin’ to the bloomin’ circus! *(They’re OFF.)*

End of Scene One

ACT ONE
Scene Two

CURTAIN UP to reveal circus grounds. IRREGULARS ENTER LEFT and look around.

PHOEBE: I’ve never been to the circus.
FINNEGAN: Who can afford it? A penny to get in! That’s bloody genius, that is! Extra for peanuts. Double extra for the sideshows. Maybe I’ll own me a circus one day.

QUINN: Where is everybody?
WIGGINS: Maybe it’s not open yet.
QUINN: Where is Mr. Holmes?
WIGGINS: I’m not sure. He said he needed our help to discover what happened to the sword swallower what died the other night.

QUINN: A sword swallower died?
FINNEGAN: Right in the middle of a bloomin’ performance. T’were in all the papers. I’ll tell you all about it for a shillin’.

WIGGINS: I’m sure Mr. Holmes will be here in a jiffy.

LESTRADE: (ENTERS RIGHT, followed by the CIRCUS CAST. WAINWRIGHT carries a briefcase. OFFICER PELHAM and OFFICER WILKES ENTER RIGHT, carrying a stretcher with somebody on it, completely covered. There’s a frantic urgency in the air.) Hurry up! Look sharp! You get this man to my coach and get him to the hospital right bloody well now.

OFFICER WILKES: (With a Cockney accent so thick he can’t be understood.) Ri–a-way, Inspe’er! Yuccan cownon us.

LESTRADE: What?

OFFICER PELHAM: Right away, Inspector. You can count on us.

OFFICER WILKES: Tha’swa Ised.

LESTRADE: What did you say?

OFFICER PELHAM: No, he said, “That’s what I said,” meaning he said what I said.

OFFICER WILKES: Aye-up!

LESTRADE: Just hurry, you two.

WIGGINS: Inspector Lestrade, what’s happenin’?

LESTRADE: What are you lot doing here?

WIGGINS: Mr. Holmes asked us to meet him here.

LESTRADE: Quite. Well, Mr. Holmes has taken ill. We’re getting him to the hospital.

WIGGINS: Is this him? What happened? (Runs to the stretcher.) Mr. Holmes. Mr. Holmes!

LESTRADE: Leave off, lad! He can’t hear you. He’s very sick.

WIGGINS: (Inspects the exposed hand.) What’s wrong with his hand?

LESTRADE: Nothing is wrong with his hand.

WIGGINS: But his fingers is all black.

LESTRADE: It’s not his fingers I’m worried about. Now let us get him to a doctor. (To OFFICERS.) Off you go! Quick march.

OFFICER WILKES: (Unintelligible.) Awri, onner way inna Bob Murray.

OFFICER PELHAM: All right, we’re on our way in a big hurry.

OFFICER WILKES: Tha’swa Ised.

OFFICER PELHAM: I know what you said, but they didn’t know what you said. (OFFICERS cross LEFT with the stretcher. The famous deerstalker hat falls off the stretcher. LESTRADE picks it up. OFFICERS EXIT LEFT.)
WIGGINS: How can we help?
LESTRADE: You can stay out of the way.
WIGGINS: But—
LESTRADE: Hush, lad, the grownups are talking about grown uppity things. (To WAINWRIGHT, indicating CIRCUS CAST.) Now, Mr. Wainwright, what’s with all these youngsters flitting about?
WAINWRIGHT: They are part of my circus.
LESTRADE: These half pints? Surely not.
WAINWRIGHT: Indeed, Inspector.
ELZA: (Hugs her father.) My father’s circus is unique in all the world.
LESTRADE: How’s that?
ELZA: We’re an orphan circus.
LESTRADE: An orphan circus?
WAINWRIGHT: What my daughter is saying, Inspector, is that I have a soft spot for orphans, being one myself. I adopted Elza here, and she has been my joy and sunshine. (Puts an arm around ELZA.) She’s learning the business. She could practically run the circus now. I am so proud of her. I love her so much I wanted more.
LESTRADE: What? All of these are your children?
WAINWRIGHT: No, Inspector, but all of these orphan children are part of our circus family. They travel with the circus. I feed them and clothe them. Give them a home and hope and a purpose. And they each apprentice to the different acts.
LESTRADE: All these tykes are performers?
WAINWRIGHT: Not yet. But they will be.
ELZA: Someday.
LESTRADE: Well, I never heard of anything like that before, and that’s the truth. Right. But I want to talk to the grownups.
WAINWRIGHT: I have them all gathered in the big top waiting for your questions.
LESTRADE: Lead on. We’re going to get to the bottom of what happened to your sword swallow.
WIGGINS: How can we help, Inspector?
LESTRADE: Help? You lot can help by going home.
QUINN: We don’t have a home.
PHOEBE: Shhhh. Quinn.
ALASKA: But Mr. Holmes asked for our help.
LESTRADE: Well, here’s a bit of detective work for you, boy—
ALASKA: (Ready to fight.) Say it again. Call me a boy.
FINNEGAN: (Holds her back.) Easy.
LESTRADE: Mr. Holmes ain’t here. He took ill, and we just rushed him off to the hospital. And Scotland Yard doesn’t require the services of a bunch of street rats.

QUINN: What’s a street rat?
FINNEGAN: He means us. Gutter rubbish.
WIGGINS: We’re not rubbish.
LESTRADE: You’re not policemen either.
WIGGINS: But Mr. Holmes said—
LESTRADE: And you ain’t bleeding Sherlock Holmes either, are you, lad? (That hits WIGGINS like a slap. Then, gently.) Look, I dunno know what Mr. Holmes sees in you, but this one is not for you. (Puts the deerstalker hat on WIGGINS’S head.) Now get out of here, ’cause I need to talk to the grownups. And if you get in my way, I’ll have you thrown in the clink for obstructing an officer of the Yard in his duties.

PHOEBE: But—
LESTRADE: No buts. Go on. Now, Mr. Wainwright, let’s go have a little chat with your more mature employees.

WAINWRIGHT: Certainly inspector. Right this way. (ALL except IRREGULARS EXIT. IRREGULARS huddle. WIGGINS Takes off the hat and holds it with awe and respect.)

FINNEGAN: So much for me bloody shillin’!
QUINN: What happened? What’s next? Are we leaving?

PHOEBE: Looks like we have to.
WIGGINS: No. We’re not leavin’.
FINNEGAN: You heard Lestrade. He wants us gone.
WIGGINS: ’Course he does. He ain’t no different than the rest of ’em grown ups. Only one I ever met worth his salt is Mr. Holmes.

FINNEGAN: Can say that again.
WIGGINS: Don’t matter to him what your station may be. To Sherlock, everyone can do all right. Even us. And I ain’t lettin’ him down.
ALASKA: But Holmes ain’t here. He’s sick.
WIGGINS: Right. Look what I found in his hat!

QUINN: Is it a rabbit?
WIGGINS: No.
QUINN: Oh, pudding! It’s not an octopus, is it?
WIGGINS: No. (Pulls out a slip of paper.)
QUINN: What’s it say?
WIGGINS: Just my name. Wiggins. And one word. Murdered.
QUINN: Murdered?
WIGGINS: That’s right. He’s tellin’ us the sword swallow was murdered. That’s why he was here, to find the killer.
FINNEGAN: But Lestrade—
WIGGINS: You know Mr. Holmes always says Inspector Lestrade couldn’t find his own bottom with both hands. And with Dr. Watson away on his honeymoon, who else is gonna catch a killer? It’s up to us.
ALASKA: You heard Lestrade. He’ll lock us up. Ain’t goin’ back to no orphanage. Not ever. And I ain’t goin’ to no workhouse neither. I like livin’ on the streets. Don’t you?
QUINN: Not so much.
WIGGINS: We don’t have to get in Lestrade’s way. He’s investigatin’ all the adults.
PHOEBE: So?
WIGGINS: When do adults ever know anythin’?
PHOEBE: Right. So we talk to the young ones.
WIGGINS: Simple. Let Lestrade talk to the grownups, and we’ll investigate the orphans. And we’ll see which one catches us a killer. Who’s with me?
QUINN: I am.
PHOEBE: I am.
ALASKA: I reckon.
FINNEGAN: I am.
WIGGINS: Good. We’ll split up, talk to the kids, then meet back here and compare our notes. Ready?
IRREGULARS: Ready.
WIGGINS: (Puts on the hat and Pulls out the magnifying glass.) Come on then. The game’s afoot! (ALL except WIGGINS EXIT RIGHT and LEFT.)

End of Scene Two

ACT ONE
Scene Three

WIGGINS gets on all fours and inspects the ground.
ELZA: (ENTERS RIGHT, unseen by WIGGINS.) What are you doing?
WIGGINS: (Startled.) What?
ELZA: What are you doing?
WIGGINS: Nothin’. What are you doing here? I thought you were with your father?
ELZA: I was, but Inspector Lestrade is talking to all the adults. He didn't want me around. I don't think he likes children much.

WIGGINS: You can say that twice and be half right.

ELZA: You're trying to figure out what happened to Crispin, aren't you?

WIGGINS: Crispin?

ELZA: The sword swallower. Poor, unlucky man! He was such a kind, loving soul once. You're investigating his death, I assume.

WIGGINS: Um...

ELZA: Even though Inspector Lestrade told you not to.

WIGGINS: Listen—

ELZA: It's all right. I won't tell. I'm not sure the inspector can find the truth. That's why my father hired Mr. Sherlock Holmes. You admire him, don't you?

WIGGINS: Who?

ELZA: Sherlock Holmes.

WIGGINS: Why you say that?

ELZA: I'm not stupid. I saw your face when you heard he was sick. You've taken up the case. You've got a magnifying glass just like his, and you're wearing his hat.

WIGGINS: (Embarrassed. Rips off the hat and turns away.) You wouldn't understand.

ELZA: Look at me. See this? (Points to a ring on her finger.) The letter W for Wainwright. This is my father's ring, and I wear it proudly. He adopted me when I was seven. He gave me a home, a family, a sense of purpose. I owe everything to him. I love him. And I will dedicate my life to being exactly like him.

WIGGINS: (Soft.) All right, maybe you understand a little. It's just... Mr. Holmes— well, he ain't like everyone else. He takes time to look inside you, you know? To them others, I was a pickpocket. Not Holmes. Even after I stole from him. A ten piece and a silver bucket.

ELZA: What did he do?

WIGGINS: Well, he didn't turn me in, that's for sure. Could've put me away, but instead told me he could use a man of my talents. Saw me as a man of talent, he did.

ELZA: And now you are?

WIGGINS: That's right. Mr. Holmes saw me as somethin' more than a street rat. Believed in me when no one else did.

ELZA: And so you want to be just like him.

WIGGINS: I know that sounds daft—
ELZA: Not at all. Let’s see how you’re doing.

WIGGINS: What?

ELZA: Sherlock Holmes is known for his power of deduction. Look at me and tell me what you see. *(Stands with her hands at her sides.)*

WIGGINS: Right then. Let’s see... *(Circles her, looks at every detail.)* You go away to boardin’ school. The Shelby School for Girls in Brighton. You have spectacles, but you think they make you look silly.

ELZA: How do you know all that?

WIGGINS: Your face has color, which says you spend time in the sun. I can see lines around your eyes where you squint, which means you don’t see well but don’t wear glasses. You could afford them, so the only reason not to wear them is you don’t like them. You gots a callus on your right index finger what says you write a lot. That means school. But you’re not naturally righthanded cause that’d put a callus on your middle finger. And I can see you dislocated a finger on your left hand. So school, sunshine, finger—that means the Shelby School in Brighton ‘cause they got a nasty reputation of whackin’ the knuckles of anybody what writes lefthanded.

ELZA: That was amazing!

WIGGINS: Was I right?

ELZA: You’re certainly learning.

WIGGINS: Was I right?

ELZA: It doesn’t matter. I am very impressed. You should be proud.

WIGGINS: Was I right?!

ELZA: *(Beat, then gently.)* No. I’m sorry. I don’t go to school. My father teaches me. Everything I know I’ve learned from him. *(WIGGINS looks crushed.)* But it was a valiant effort. *(Stops WIGGINS from walking away.)* No, really. Even Sherlock Holmes wasn’t born Sherlock Holmes. You can do this. Let me help you.

WIGGINS: What?

ELZA: I know the circus better than anybody. Let me help you, and I bet we can find out what happened to poor Crispin.

WIGGINS: I dunno...

ELZA: We’ll make Sherlock Holmes proud.

WIGGINS: All right.

ELZA: Come on. Let’s talk to Zolda. She was one of the last ones to see Crispin alive. *(WIGGINS and ELZA EXIT RIGHT.)*

End of Scene Three
ACT ONE
Scene Four

CRANK ENTERS LEFT, followed by JINGLES. Both are dressed like traditional clowns, complete with oversized shoes, baggy pants with suspenders, clown nose, etc. CRANK carries a horn and a long wooden plank over a shoulder.

JINGLES: Ho there, Crank.
CRANK: Yes, Jingles? (Turns, swinging the plank.)
JINGLES: (Ducks the plank.) Where are we goin’?
CRANK: Over there. (Turns around again, pointing and swinging the plank. JINGLES ducks it again.) What you think you’re doin’?

JINGLES: Wha’?
CRANK: You ducked, didn’t you?
JINGLES: So?
CRANK: You’re not s’posed to duck.
JINGLES: You said.
CRANK: You duck the first time. Then when I turn around, you get smacked in the gob and fall down.
JINGLES: Why’s that?
CRANK: ’Cause it’s funny.
JINGLES: How is me gettin’ smacked in the gob good and funny?
CRANK: That’s what humor is all about, isn’ it?
JINGLES: How come humor is always about me gettin’ gob-smacked or slippin’ on banana peels or gettin’ poked in the eye all the bloody time?
CRANK: It Makes people laugh, don’ it?
JINGLES: I’m not laughin’.
CRANK: It’s what bein’ a clown’s all about, isn’ it?
JINGLES: But why? Why don’t we sing a clever song? Or tell a funny story. Like the time we all went ice skatin’, and you got your tongue stuck on me skate.
CRANK: ’Cause that’s not clownin’. That’s storytellin’, that is! Clownin’ is about gettin’ whitewash poured down your trousers.
JINGLES: Maybe I could be a storyteller.
CRANK: Then go get yourself adopted by a writer family. But that didn’t happen, did it? You’re in a circus. You’re a clown. Like me.
JINGLES: But you ain’t funny.
CRANK: I’m bleedin’ hysterical, me. And Mr. Wainwright gave us a chance, didn’t he? A home, a family, a future. We’re trainin’ to be clowns, and you better start bein’ funny. (Yanks on JINGLES’S suspenders. JINGLES recoils as CRANK honks a horn and JINGLES yelps, jumps a little, then slips and falls.) That’s better.

JINGLES: Still don’t think that’s funny.
CRANK: It is.
QUINN: (ENTERS LEFT.) Hello.
CRANK: Who’s this then?
QUINN: I’m Quinn. Who are you?
CRANK: I’m Crank, and this here lug is Jingles.
JINGLES: Not our real names o’ course.
CRANK: They’re our funny names.
JINGLES: She’s not laughing.
CRANK: Maybe she’s a quiet laugher.
JINGLES: Crank isn’t a very funny name.
CRANK: It’s our clown names and that’s good enough, isn’ it? Wanna smell me flower?
JINGLES: Don’t.
CRANK: It’s not funny if she don’t get squirted.
JINGLES: It’s not funny when she does.
QUINN: So you two are clowns? Is it hard? Are your feet really that big?
JINGLES: Do you think clowns is funny?
CRANK: Quiet. (Shoves JINGLES, who falls in a stupidly silly pratfall.) See? That’s more like it.
JINGLES: She’s not laughin’.
CRANK: She has no sense of humor is all.
QUINN: If you say so.
CRANK: I do. What are you? New meat?
QUINN: What do you mean? What’s new meat?
CRANK: I mean you an orphan? Did Mr. Wainwright bring you into our little family?
QUINN: Me? No.
CRANK: What are you doin’ here then? Circus is closed at the moment, isn’ it?
QUINN: Inspector Lestrade is asking the grownups about your sword swallower.
JINGLES: Crispin?
CRANK: He died.
QUINN: Very sad.
JINGLES: Not funny at all.
QUINN: Right in the middle of a performance I heard. Did you see it?
Was it bad?
JINGLES: He was right at the end of his act. He swallowed his sword all the way to the hilt.
CRANK: Then he just keeled over, didn’t he? (Makes a good clownish impression of sword swallowing, then a goofy face, then a pratfall death.)
JINGLES: That’s not funny.
CRANK: (Leaps to his feet.) It’s a work in progress, isn’ it?
JINGLES: Won’t ever be funny.
QUINN: And he died? Just like that? Was it silly like that?
CRANK: See, she thinks I’m funny.
JINGLES: She said silly. Not the same.
CRANK: I’m very funny.
JINGLES: It ain’t nice to make fun of him. Crispin were a nice enough man.
CRANK: At least he used to be.
QUINN: You didn’t like him?
CRANK: Not anymore.
QUINN: Why not? Was he mean? Did his breath smell mungy?
JINGLES: He was a bit impulsive, but he was all right.
CRANK: If he was such a great man, then why’d Molly run off, eh?
QUINN: Who’s Molly?
CRANK: Molly was Crispin’s apprentice.
JINGLES: She loved him like a father.
QUINN: Really? What was she like? Was she nice like you?
JINGLES: Molly was like most of us. Couldn’t get adopted anywhere else, but Mr. Wainwright took her on. Crispin the Astounding was teachin’ her to swallow swords and throw knives and be a real showman.
QUINN: Did Crispin love Molly?
JINGLES: Yes.
CRANK: No.
JINGLES: Why do you say no?
CRANK: Why do you say yes?
JINGLES: You know he loved her. (To QUINN.) Crispin would take her sightseein’ in every town we stopped. They’d play games, and he’d read to her every night. He taught her everythin’ he knew. She were like a daughter to him.

CRANK: Yeah? If he was so great, then why’d she run away?

JINGLES: I dunno.

CRANK: He must’ve done something bloody awful for her to just run off like that. He deserved what he got, didn’t he?

QUINN: Why do you say that? Do you hate him?

JINGLES: Crank was sweet on Molly.

CRANK: Shut your gob!

JINGLES: It ain’t no secret. Everybody knows you had eyes for Molly.

CRANK: And she’s gone now, isn’t she? All ’cause of him.

QUINN: Why do you blame Crispin?

CRANK: He must’ve done somethin’ to her. He must’ve. She wouldn’t of run off like that otherwise. She wouldn’t have left me if it weren’t for him. If you ask me, he had it comin’.

QUINN: Where’d she run off?

CRANK: If I knew that, I’d go get her, wouldn’t I?

QUINN: Where’s the last place you saw her?

CRANK: Birmingham.

JINGLES: Nah, it were Leeds.

CRANK: Birmingham.

JINGLES: Leeds. Remember, it was the night of the big museum fire, and we was afraid the fire was gonna spread to the circus. Mr. Wainwright had us pack up early and move on.

CRANK: That’s right. Were Leeds.

QUINN: Anything else you can tell me?

JINGLES: Well, once when we went ice skatin’, Crank got his tongue froze to my skate.

CRANK: That’s not funny.

JINGLES: You didn’t let me finish.

CRANK: Come on then. We need to rehearse. (Picks up the big plank, slings it over shoulder and turns to leave. WHAP! It looks like it catches JINGLES right in the face. JINGLES falls hard. QUINN laughs.) See? That’s funny. (EXITS LEFT.)

JINGLES: (Follows CRANK OFF, holding face.) I don’t see why comedy has to hurt so bloody much.

QUINN: (Follows them OFF.) How come your pants don’t fall down? What’s the flower squirt? Is that your real nose? Have you ever got
hit in the face with a pie? What kind of pie? Do you like coconut? (They're OUT.)

End of Scene Four

ACT ONE
Scene Five

PIPER, FESS and DIGGER ENTER RIGHT. PIPER has her hair tucked into a hat, wears khakis and a baggy blouse and carries a whip. FESS and DIGGER wear dirty work clothes, pull a wheelbarrow and carry brooms and rakes. They sweep and rake the far UPSTAGE area. FESS has a clothespin on his nose which Makes him talk funny. PIPER points to the floor.

PIPER: Look. There's more. And more. And more.
FESS: Blimey! That elephant sure gets around.
DIGGER: (Happy.) That's a lot of muck.
PIPER: I told you to muck out the elephant car good last night.
FESS: How come you's in charge?
DIGGER: (Cheerful.) Muck muck muck.
PIPER: 'Cause I have seniority.
DIGGER: (Points to piles OFF RIGHT.) Oh, look! Tiger muck!
FESS: I don't know what that means.
DIGGER: Zebra muck!
PIPER: It means I've been here longer.
DIGGER: Hippo muck!
FESS: (To DIGGER.) Not right, a girl being in charge.
PHOEBE: (ENTERS.) Excuse me, gents.
DIGGER: (Happy.) You ain't a girl being in charge.
PHOEBE: (ENTERS.) Excuse me, gents.
DIGGER: Oy! Not muck.
PHOEBE: Oh, I do beg your pardon, gents and lady. (Curtsies to DIGGER.) I wonder if I might trouble you for a moment of your time.
FESS: (To PIPER.) Well, ain't she a la-di-da.
PHOEBE: Are you in charge here?
FESS: I oughta be.
DIGGER: But you isn't.
FESS: Well, I could be.
DIGGER: But you ain't.
PIPER: Who wants to know?
PHOEBE: I beg your pardon. Where are my manners? My name is Phoebe. (Offers a hand to FESS, who just stares at it, not sure what to do.)
PIPER: (To FESS.) Kiss it or shake it. But do somethin'!
FESS: (Kisses PHOEBE’S hand, likes it, then smiles at PHOEBE, who bats her eyes back.) Pleased to meet you. I’m Fess.

PHOEBE: And who are your acquaintances?
FESS: They don’t matter.

PIPER: I’m Piper. The little ‘un is Digger.
DIGGER: Hello.

PIPER: And Fess ain’t in charge.
FESS: Hmph. Should be.
DIGGER: Ain’t though.

PHOEBE: (To PIPER.) Are you in charge, sir?

FESS: Ha! She ain’t no sir! (PIPER Takes off her hat.)

PHOEBE: You’re a lady?

FESS: Shocker, ain’t it?

PIPER: Yeah, that’s the beauty of workin’ with animals, see. They don’t give a tin hoot about looks, or think I should be somethin’ else. It doesn’t bother them if I don’t drink with my pinkie up.

FESS: Which you don’t.

PIPER: They don’t mind if I have calluses or scars.

FESS: Which you do.

PIPER: They only care if I’m kind and gentle.

DIGGER: (To FESS.) Which you ain’t.

FESS: Sod off!

PHOEBE: You’re animal trainers.

DIGGER: Not yet. But Piper here is better with the animals than anybody else. She can tell every kind of muck just by the smell.

FESS: A real talent.

DIGGER: Piper loves the animals more than anythin’. She’d do anythin’ for ‘em. She’s gonna be the world’s greatest lion tamer.

FESS: Don’t be daft. They ain’t gonna make a girl a lion tamer.

DIGGER: You wait and see.

FESS: (Shows off.) I can put my head in a lion’s mouth.

DIGGER: Ha!

FESS: Well, I will. If they ever give me the chance.

PIPER: Leo will never let you put your head in his mouth. You scare him.
FESS: Good.
PIPER: Won’t be when he bites your head off.
FESS: Then he’ll feel my chair and my whip.
PIPER: That’ll only scare him more.

FESS: A lion’s got to know respect, know who his master is. I don’t take no cheek from nobody.

PHOEBE: (Back to business.) Ahem… If it wouldn’t be an imposition, I was hoping you could tell me about Crispin.

DIGGER: The sword swallower?

FESS: What do you want to know about him for?

PHOEBE: He died. Don’t you want to know what happened? What can you tell me about him?

PIPER: He used to be a decent chap.

DIGGER: Before Molly run off.

PHOEBE: Who’s Molly?

PIPER: His apprentice. Treated her like a daughter, he did.

FESS: But she run off one night. Then Crispin climbed inside a bottle and drank himself squiffy. He boxed my ears one night.

DIGGER: Because you were scrumpin’ around his tent.

FESS: I weren’t gonna steal Nothin’. Just wanted to see his swords is all. And he didn’t have to go off his trolley, did he?

DIGGER: Fess promised to get even with Crispin.

FESS: Shove off. I didn’t do Nothin’ to him. B’sides, Digger’s got more reason to be mad on him. He scared her out of her mind, he did. And Piper downright threatened him.

PHOEBE: Oh, dear. What happened?

DIGGER: We’d just finished a week in Mayfair, and I was cleanin’ up in one of the horse stalls. Then I hear Star screamin’ like.

PHOEBE: Star?

PIPER: One of our horses. We call her Star ‘cause she’s all black with a white patch on her forehead.

PHOEBE: I see.

DIGGER: So I goes to see, and there’s Crispin in Star’s stall. And he’s layin’ on the ground.

PHOEBE: Did he fall down?

DIGGER: Must’ve. And Star is kickin’ and neighin’, about to stomp his head in. I tell him to clear off, but he gets to his feet and corners me, you know, like he’s gonna hit me or somethin’.

PHOEBE: Oh, no!
1 DIGGER: But then Piper comes to me rescue.
PHOEBE: Like a white knight?
FESS: Hmph!
PIPER: I tell Crispin to leave, and he won’t. Tells me to mind my own business. But the animals are my business, and Crispin was scaring Star! So I take my whip and give it a good crack, and he runs off.

PHOEBE: How long ago was that?
DIGGER: About a month ago.

PHOEBE: That’s all?
PIPER: That’s all I know.
FESS: That ain’t all. You threatened to kill Crispin if he ever came near your animals again.

PIPER: We steered clear of each other after that, we did. (Eager to leave.) Now, we still got muckin’ to do.
DIGGER: (Excited.) Yeah, muck.

PHOEBE: Just a few more questions—
PIPER: No time.

DIGGER: Got ostrich muck and horse muck and goat muck and giraffe muck... (PIPER and DIGGER EXIT.)

PHOEBE: (Stops FESS before he can leave.) Please, just a few more questions.
FESS: Why?
PHOEBE: I’m trying to solve Crispin’s murder. (FESS laughs. PHOEBE is confused and hurt.)
FESS: What? You? That’s rich!
PHOEBE: Why?
FESS: Inspector Lestrade is on the case. You should leave it to the menfolk.

PHOEBE: Menfolk?
FESS: Don’t you worry your pretty little head over it.
PHOEBE: My pretty little head?
FESS: I can see you know how to behave. You’re a proper lady, you is. Not like Piper. You don’t get above your station.

PHOEBE: My station?
FESS: Shouldn’t try to take charge or give orders or think too much. How about you and me take a walk in the moonlight?
PHOEBE: No, thank you.
FESS: Come now, don’t be like that. (Grabs PHOEBE’S arm.)
PHOEBE: Let me go.

FESSION: What? I'm not good enough for you, is that it? (Grabs both arms.) 'Cause I got calluses on me hands? I ain't good enough for a delicate little flower like you?

PHOEBE: Let me go!

FESSION: I don't take orders from girls. (PHOEBE struggles. FESS holds her tight.)

ALASKA: (ENTERS RIGHT.) Hey! Let her go!

FESSION: Get stuffed, boy. This doesn't concern y— (In one quick move, ALASKA stomps his foot, then grabs his arm and bends it up behind him. FESS drops to his knees in pain.) Yeow!

ALASKA: Say it again! Call me a boy again. I dare you.

FESSION: Ow. You're gonna break me arm. Let me go.

ALASKA: Skedaddle. (Releases him.)

FESSION: (Staggers to his feet and points an accusing finger.) You're off your nut. The pair of you! You leave off me. (Runs OFF.)

ALASKA: (To PHOEBE.) You all right there, princess?

PHOEBE: (Shaken.) Don't call me that.

ALASKA: Forgive me for tryin' to help. You want me to call him back?

PHOEBE: No!

ALASKA: You wanna tell me what that was all about?

PHOEBE: He saw me as a lady.

ALASKA: Good for you.

PHOEBE: No, it's not good. It's not good at all. That's all he saw. He saw the dress and the shoes, but he didn't see me. He saw the manners and posture, but he didn't see me. He just saw... a lace doily.

ALASKA: Hey, I didn't mean Nothin' by that.

PHOEBE: When I was in the orphanage, I saw the girls that got adopted. The ones that were wanted. The demure, polite, fragile little girls. I wanted to be that, so I learned to cook and sew, how to speak and walk and have manners. I became... a doily. Is that all I am?

ALASKA: No.

PHOEBE: I'm not like you.

ALASKA: No, you ain't.

PHOEBE: I'm not a scrapper like Finnegan or a leader like Wiggins. So what am I?

ALASKA: You're you. You're a better detective than any Pinkerton I ever saw. And the greatest detective in the world trusts you to help
PHOEBE: (Comforted.) Really?
ALASKA: I ain’t never gonna be all high-falutin’ like you. Don’t mean you gotta be like everybody else.
PHOEBE: Thank you.
ALASKA: (Punches PHOEBE’S arm.) Now plug the leak. We got work to do. (PHOEBE and ALASKA EXIT.)

End of Scene Five

ACT ONE

Scene Six

ELZA ENTERS with WIGGINS and ZOLDA, who wears a fortune teller’s cape and flowing gown.

ELZA: Zolda, this is Wiggins.
ZOLDA: I am being pleased at meeting you.
ELZA: (To WIGGINS.) Zolda is apprentice to Madam Balazar.
ZOLDA: The greatest fortune teller in all Europe!
ELZA: Madam Balazar is teaching Zolda the mystic arts.
ZOLDA: I am being a fast learner.
ELZA: Mr. Wiggins is—
ZOLDA: (Puts a hand to her head, as if getting a reading from the great beyond.) —here with his friends.

ELZA: That’s right.
ZOLDA: They are to investigate the death of Crispin.
ELZA: Yes.
ZOLDA: But they are not being policemen.
ELZA: No. They work for—
ZOLDA: Tell me not. I can see. (More mystical swooning.) They are being help to the great Sherlock Holmes.
WIGGINS: Wow! How do you know this?
ZOLDA: I have gift. I see what others do not.
ELZA: Wiggins can see what others can’t, too. He’s a great detective in his own right.
ZOLDA: A great detective.
WIGGINS: Well, I’m no Sherlock Holmes.
ELZA: Not yet. (WIGGINS smiles at ELZA, who squeezes his arm in support.)
ZOLDA: And you are wanting to ask me questions.
WIGGINS: About Crispin the sword swallower.
ZOLDA: Bah! (Spits on the floor and stomps it.)

ELZA: Zolda!

ZOLDA: The man was pig.

ELZA: Zolda, a little respect. The man died.

ZOLDA: I am not showing respect when pig dies. I am simply eating bacon.

WIGGINS: You didn’t like him?

ZOLDA: He was piggy-man.

ELZA: He was a great performer. People came from all over to see him. I don’t know how we will keep our audiences up without him.

ZOLDA: Yes, but after show is over, he is being piggy again.

WIGGINS: How so?

ZOLDA: He is being big meanie man.

WIGGINS: To you?

ZOLDA: Worse. To Madam Balazar.

ELZA: Her mentor.

ZOLDA: She is more than mentor.

ELZA: My father has tried to create a family here.

ZOLDA: Mr. Wainwright bring me here, give me place to stay. I owe him much, but Madam Balazar is giving me home. I am owing her everything.

WIGGINS: Tell me how Crispin was mean to Madam Balazar.

ZOLDA: He is coming to tent one night very upset. He demand that Madam look into her crystal ball, tell him where Molly is.

WIGGINS: Molly?

ELZA: Crispin’s apprentice. More like his daughter, really. She ran away.

ZOLDA: And then Crispin turn into pig-man. He scream at Madam, “Tell me where Molly is! Tell me now!”

WIGGINS: But Madam Balazar didn’t know.

ELZA: Nobody knows.

ZOLDA: Madam is looking into the crystal. She is trying, straining to see, but she cannot. The crystal stays unclear.

WIGGINS: What happened?

ZOLDA: Crispin yells like crazy pig-man. He smashes crystal ball, then storms into night.

WIGGINS: Madam must’ve been bloody upset.

ZOLDA: About her honor, she is not worried, but the crystal ball. It was her grandmother’s. How do you replace?
WIGGINS: There must be a shop in town that sells them.

ZOLDA: It is not a lampshade. It is an oracle. A talisman to look into another dimension. They are handcrafted by Gypsies. We were playing in Manchester then. There are no Gypsies in Manchester.

ELZA: Madam Balazar still hasn’t found a new crystal ball.

ZOLDA: She is not being able to do readings.

ELZA: It’s costing the circus money.

WIGGINS: Surely there’s a glass shop where you can buy one.

ZOLDA: Glass shop?!

WIGGINS: It’s not like it’s a real crystal ball, eh? It’s just a hunka glass. You wave your hands around it and say some mumbo-jumbo, and you can make up anythin’ you want.

ZOLDA: (Gets mad.) You are thinking we are fakes?

WIGGINS: No, I didn’t mean that.

ZOLDA: Madam is not fake. I am not fake!

WIGGINS: Right. Sorry.

ZOLDA: Perhaps you are being the fake!

ELZA: Zolda.

ZOLDA: Let us see, shall we? (Pulls out a deck of Tarot cards.) The cards will tell.

WIGGINS: Blimey, I didn’t mean to insult you.

ZOLDA: Cut the cards, and let us be seeing if you are a phony detective.

ELZA: Zolda—

ZOLDA: He is coming to me for help. He has questions. Is he now afraid to hear answers?

WIGGINS: I’m not afraid.

ZOLDA: Then let us find out what you are. Cut. (Shoves WIGGINS onto the bench. He cuts the cards and puts them on the barrel between them. ZOLDA flips the cards.) The hermit. You are alone. An orphan since you were... (Flips another card.)... three. (Another card.) Death. (Another card.) And lightning over water. Your parents died at sea. Lost in a storm.

WIGGINS: How do you know that? I never told nobody that.

ZOLDA: (Another card.) The wanderer. You live on the streets. No home. No family.

WIGGINS: (Awestruck.) Blimey!

ZOLDA: (Another card.) The wizard. A wise man, a great man, Takes you under his wing.

ELZA: Sherlock Holmes.

ZOLDA: He believes in you.
WIGGINS: I won’t let him down.
ZOLDA: (Another card.) The imposter. But you are not what he thinks you are.
WIGGINS: All right, that’s enough.
ZOLDA: The card is inverted, so you are not even what you think you are.
WIGGINS: I don’t want to hear anymore.
ZOLDA: So what are you?
WIGGINS: I said enough.
ZOLDA: Let us find out.
WIGGINS: No.
ZOLDA: (Another card.) The fool. That is you, playing at being a detective, but you are just a fool. (Enraged, WIGGINS stands, sweeps the cards off the barrel and marches DOWNSTAGE.)

ELZA: Zolda!
ZOLDA: I am just reading the cards. What matters if I am just a phony? If I am fakie-fake, why is he so angry? (Gathers her cards.) If I am fake, then you are not. But if I am not... Good-bye, mister great detective. (EXITS.)

ELZA: (Crosses to WIGGINS.) She didn’t mean anything.
WIGGINS: Right.
ELZA: It’s just an act. That’s all.
WIGGINS: Sure.
ELZA: Madam Balazar reads cards and crystal balls and palms and tea leaves. She makes up about 12 percent of our revenues. People pay her to tell them what they want to hear.
WIGGINS: You think that’s what I wanted to hear?
ELZA: No. You hurt her feelings. She wanted to hurt back, that’s all.
WIGGINS: That’s all?
ELZA: She just made all that up. None of it’s true.
WIGGINS: I’m not so sure.
ELZA: I am. You are not a fool.
WIGGINS: Then what am I?
ELZA: Shall I tell you what I see? (Reads WIGGINS’S palm.) This line is determination. And this line says you are quick to learn. (Placed a hand on his heart.) And this says you can be anything you want to be. (WIGGINS smiles.) I don’t care if you’re a great detective. We don’t have much need for detectives at the circus. (WIGGINS looks at her, deeply.) I’m sure my father could find a place for you here. Would you like that?
WIGGINS: Yes.
ELZA: You’d have a home, a family. Let’s go ask my father right now.
WIGGINS: (Shakes it off.) Not yet.
ELZA: But—
WIGGINS: I may be a fool, and I may be a lousy detective, but I ain’t a quitter. I could never look Mr. Holmes in the face again if I didn’t try. Come on then. The game is still afoot. (Grabs ELZA’S hand, and they run OFF.)

End of Scene Six
ACT ONE
Scene Seven
HAWKER ENTERS with a food tray slung over his neck.

HAWKER: (Calls out in a heavy Cockney accent, including dropping the “h” in all words that start with the letter H.) Sausages! Get yer sausages ‘ere! Piping hot sausage in a bun. Get ’em before the sizzle is gone.

FINNEGAN: (ENTERS) Hey, boyo! I’ve been lookin’ for you.
HAWKER: And I’ve been lookin’ for you.
FINNEGAN: For me? Why?
HAWKER: Because I am on an errand of mercy. I have come to save your poor tired soul and bring new life to a worn body.
FINNEGAN: How are you going to do that then?
HAWKER: With a hot sausage in a bun. Just the thing for a workin’ man like yourself.
FINNEGAN: How much?
HAWKER: That’s the best part, mate. For one shillin’ you get a hot sausage in a bun.
FINNEGAN: A shillin’? That’s highway robbery, that is.
HAWKER: Of course it is. I can see you’re a man who knows his way around a sausage and no mistake. For any normal street sausage, I’d be buggered to ask for a shillin’, but this is hand-carved pork from the finest pigs in England. Hand-massaged, they are, by blonde-haired angels! Why, when the pigs learn they get to be part of this sausage, they run to the front of the slaughter house to be first in line. A bargain at twice the price.
FINNEGAN: Why are you sellin’ anyway? The circus ain’t open.
HAWKER: No. Very observant. There’s a keen eye on you, I can see, and no mistake, but we had the sausages all made up before Mr. Wainwright and the bloody bobbies shut us down. Can’t let all this
premium meat go to waste, and I saw you and your lads here, and
I thought we might have a deal.

FINNEGAN: Nobody can afford a shillin’.
HAWKER: You might be surprised. On a good day, I can sell a hundred
or more.
FINNEGAN: At a shillin’ a go?
HAWKER: Right you are, mate.
FINNEGAN: Sweet Mary! You must be a millionaire.
HAWKER: Well, there’s overhead and expenses and labor, but a keen
man can make a pound or two.
FINNEGAN: I have to sell a hundred newspapers to get a farthin’.
HAWKER: You must not be very good at it.
FINNEGAN: Hey, now!
HAWKER: Sellin’s an art. You can get anybody to buy anythin’.
FINNEGAN: I doubt it.
HAWKER: That’s cause you’re not thinkin’ straight. I seen you walkin’
back and forth across the circus grounds. You must’ve walked
about seven miles already.
FINNEGAN: At least.
HAWKER: And it’s got your head in a fog. Seven miles on an empty
stomach. That’s a crime against nature. When’s the last time you
ate?
FINNEGAN: Day before yesterday.
HAWKER: And here you are doin’ police business. Seven miles under
the hot sun. Your stomach must think your throat’s been slit.
FINNEGAN: Maybe.
HAWKER: And I bet when you did eat, it wasn’t hand-carved pork.
(Wafts the tray under FINNEGAN’S nose. FINNEGAN, caught up in
the moment, swoons at the smell.) Smell that. Succulent pork
nestled in a fresh soft bun with hot mustard and onions so sweet
they’re almost like candy.
FINNEGAN: All right. I’ll take one.
HAWKER: Right you are, mate. (Offers it, then stops.) One shillin’.
FINNEGAN: Oh, faith. I don’t have a shillin’.
HAWKER: That’s all right, mate. We can still make a deal. Sell me
your hat.
FINNEGAN: My hat?
HAWKER: It’s a fine hat, a gentleman’s hat. I can see that right off.
Sell it to me, and you’ll have enough for a sausage in a bun.
FINNEGAN: But I like my hat. A gent dropped it once, so I got to keep it.

HAWKER: But you ain’t gonna starve without it are you?

FINNEGAN: (Thinks hard.) All right. (HAWKER hands over some coins and Takes the hat. FINNEGAN counts the money.) Hey. That’s not enough.

HAWKER: I know, mate. I deducted the money for the sausage.

FINNEGAN: Oh.

HAWKER: And here you go. Fresh hot sausage in a bun. (Hands over a wrapped packet.) Eh-uh. They cost a shillin’, remember?

FINNEGAN: Oh, right. (Hands over a coin.) There you go.

HAWKER: And you just been had. That, mate, is called salesmanship. Not everyone can do it. It’s a gift.

FINNEGAN: (Angry, he puts the wrapped sausage back, shoves the coins at HAWKER and grabs his hat.) Gift of gab more like!

HAWKER: And it’s gonna make me a millionaire and no mistake.

FINNEGAN: Why don’t you gab about the sword swallower?

HAWKER: Crispin? That prat?

FINNEGAN: I heard he was a nice man.

HAWKER: He used to be right enough, but after Molly run off he became a prat and no mistake.

FINNEGAN: You didn’t like him?

HAWKER: Not after what he did.

FINNEGAN: What did he do, then?

HAWKER: Destroyed our nosh trolley, he did. Brand new, grade A food cart it was. Top of the line and he ruined it.

FINNEGAN: Why?

HAWKER: I don’t know. He was out of his mind. I could hear him having a row with Madam Balazar. All screamin’ and yellin’ coming from the Gypsy tent. I hear something smash and next thing I know ol’ Crispin is comin’ this way. I try to get out of his way, but he just tips over our trolley. Breaks everythin’.

FINNEGAN: That’s terrible.

HAWKER: Ain’t the half of it. That comes out of me pocket that does. Nearly six months pay I had to give up to get a new one. On top of all that, I had to sell everythin’ by hand until we got to Kent where we could get a new one.

FINNEGAN: Sounds like a real duffer.

HAWKER: Six months!

FINNEGAN: That would’ve made me mad.
HAWKER: You ain’t kiddin’.
FINNEGAN: Six months and not a farthin’.
HAWKER: How is that fair?
FINNEGAN: I would have wanted some payback.
HAWKER: Oh, I did.
FINNEGAN: I would have wanted revenge, me.
HAWKER: Oh, I did.
FINNEGAN: I would have wanted to kill him.
HAWKER: Oh, I did. (Catches himself.) Wait! No. I didn’t kill him!
FINNEGAN: You just said—
HAWKER: I said I wanted to. But I didn’t.
FINNEGAN: You had a motive. You had opportunity. You are now a suspect. And that, mate, is called detective work. It’s a gift. Not everybody can do it. (Dofts his hat and gives it a jaunty tap as WIGGINS and ELZA ENTER.)
WIGGINS: Finneghan. There you are.
FINNEGAN: Wiggins. I practically got the whole case solved, me.
HAWKER: I didn’t kill him.
FINNEGAN: He’s a liar.
HAWKER: I never lied.
FINNEGAN: Are your sausages really made from hand-carved pigs?
HAWKER: Yes.
FINNEGAN: Liar!
HAWKER: All right. I lied. They’re not.
FINNEGAN: So you are a liar.
HAWKER: Yes.
FINNEGAN: And you didn’t kill Crispin?
HAWKER: No.
FINNEGAN: Liar!
HAWKER: I didn’t... I wouldn’t... I couldn’t... I shouldn’t... I... I...
ELZA: Finneghan. You’re a newsie, right?
FINNEGAN: Sometimes, but I hear the real money is sellin’ sausages in a bun. But it could be a lie.
WIGGINS: Do you remember a story about a museum fire in Leeds?
FINNEGAN: Aye. Big tragedy like that. I sold me a lot of papers that day. Tragedy is good for the wallet.
ELZA: What happened?
FINNEGAN: I don’t remember it all, just the headlines. Big museum fire. A poor lady got burned up, nobody knows who she was.

WIGGINS: Can you get me that issue of your paper? Right away.

FINNEGAN: Aye. But why?

ELZA: He’s making deductions.

WIGGINS: Two tragedies while the circus was in town got me thinkin’. And any other back issues of the paper you can carry. Go. Hurry. (FINNEGAN EXITS LEFT, WIGGINS and ELZA EXIT RIGHT.)

HAWKER: (Stands a moment, torn between which way to go.) Wait! I didn’t kill him. I swear! (Runs OFF LEFT, chasing FINNEGAN.)

End of ACT ONE

ACT TWO
Scene One

ACROBATS ENTER RIGHT, flipping, somersaulting, cartwheeling. They wear matching tights and tutus and look all girly-girl.

BLYTHE: (Speaks with a French accent.) Tada! What do you think?

TARA: (Claps loudly.) Brava! Brava!

CHARITY: (With a weak French accent, obviously fake.) Blythe, you are so wonderful and so beautiful. I think you shall be walking ze tightrope and swinging ze trapeze before ze summer.

BLYTHE: Do you think so?

CHARITY: Oui.

TARA: (Also with a weak, fake French accent.) We? You think I’ll be walking the tightrope? Goody.

CHARITY: No. Tara you are not ready.

TARA: Awww!

BLYTHE: She is... how you say? (Whispers to CHARITY.)

CHARITY: Clumsy.

BLYTHE: Clumsy?

CHARITY: Oui.

TARA: You think we’re all clumsy?

CHARITY: No, just you.

TARA: But you said “we.”

CHARITY: Oui, and I meant it.

TARA: So we’re all clumsy?

CHARITY: No.

TARA: We’ll all walk the tightrope?

CHARITY: No.

TARA: But Blythe will?
CHARITY: Oui.
TARA: Goody.
CHARITY: Not you. You are not ready.
TARA: Awww! I’m not ready?

CHARITY: Oui.
TARA: We? None of us are ready?
CHARITY: No. Just you are not ready.
TARA: But you said “we.”
BLYTHE: Stop it.

TARA: Wait. Are you speaking French?
CHARITY: Oui.
TARA: What do you mean “we?” I’m not speaking French.
CHARITY: (Momentarily drops French accent,) You do know “Oui” means “yes” in French, don’t you?

TARA: And you know it means “us” in English?
CHARITY: Oui.
TARA: Yes, we all know it.
BLYTHE: Stop it. You’re hurting my brain.
ALASKA: (ENTERS with PHOEBE,) Hey there, partners. (ACROBATS look at ALASKA and burst into giggles.) Wonderin’ if we could ask you some questions.

BLYTHE: But of course. How do you say… (Whispers to CHARITY.)
CHARITY: Yankee?
BLYTHE: No.

TARA: Vacher?
BLYTHE: Cowboy! Oui.
TARA: We? I’m not a cowboy.
BLYTHE: Bonjour, cowboy.
PHOEBE: My companion is not a cowboy.

ALASKA: (Takes off her hat,) See. (ACROBATS burst into giggles.)
BLYTHE: Look. It is, how you say… Catastrophe Jane? (ACROBATS giggle.)

ALASKA: What’s so darn funny?
CHARITY: She wants to know if you are Calamity Jane?

ALASKA: Dang. I ain’t no mule skinner.
BLYTHE: (Fans her nose,) Are you certain? (More giggles.)
ALASKA: We just wanna ask you some questions about the dadgum sword swallower.
CHARITY: Crispin?
TARA: I thought he was dead.
CHARITY: Oui.
TARA: I ain’t dead.
CHARITY: No, Crispin is dead.
TARA: I knew it.
BLYTHE: We do not wish to talk about Crispin.
CHARITY: No.
TARA: We don’t?
CHARITY: Oui.
TARA: So yes? We do?
BLYTHE: Stop hurting my brain.
ALASKA: We just wanna learn a few things about him is all.
TARA: Ask him yourself.
ALASKA: I cain’t. He’s dead.
TARA: I knew that.
(BACROBATS turn to leave.)
PHOEBE: Why don’t you want to discuss him?
BLYTHE: We don’t like to speak ill of ze dead.
CHARITY: Oui.
TARA: Oui. Or we? I hate this.
ALASKA: You ain’t got Nothin’ nice to say about him?
BLYTHE: No.
ALASKA: Don’t seem to bother you none that he’s dead.
BLYTHE: No.
ALASKA: So maybe you done killed him.
BLYTHE: (ACROBATS gasp.) We are not barbarians.
CHARITY: Oui.
TARA: We are barbarians? I’m so confused now.
BLYTHE: This is not ze wild west. We are not cowboys shooting each other like you.
ALASKA: Call me a cowboy again. I dare you!
PHOEBE: Alaska. Easy.
BLYTHE: That is your name? Alaska? (ACROBATS burst into giggles.)
ALASKA: Yeah? What of it?
TARA: Nothing.
BLYTHE: Oh, that is something.
TARA: That’s what I meant.
BLYTHE: Alaska. That is, how you say... (Whispers to CHARITY.)
1  CHARITY:  Sad?
   BLYTHE:  No, no. Amusant?
   CHARITY:  Hysterique?
   BLYTHE:  Oui! Very funny.

5  ALASKA:  Yeah, it's a regular laugh riot. Why'd you hate Crispin?
   BLYTHE:  He nearly, how you say… (Whispers to CHARITY.)
   CHARITY:  Ruined? Destroyed?
   BLYTHE:  Oui. Destroyed me.
   ALASKA:  How do you figger that?

10 CHARITY:  After Molly ran away, Crispin needed a new assistant.
   BLYTHE:  Oui.
   ALASKA:  All of you?
   TARA:  See? It's not just me.
   BLYTHE:  No, just me. He put me in his act.

15 CHARITY:  Blythe got strapped to a large spinning wheel, and Crispin would throw knives at her.
   ALASKA:  I can see why he'd wanna do that.
   BLYTHE:  But ze costume he has for me. It is, how you say…
   CHARITY:  Terrible? Awful? Ugly?

20 BLYTHE:  Ugly. Oui. So very, very ugly. I cannot be seen in this costume.
   ALASKA:  Just 'cause it's ugly?
   BLYTHE:  It Makes me look ugly. I am seen by many young men. If they like ze way I look, maybe one will want to marry me. But ze costume is hideous, and men laugh at ze way I look. Laugh. At me.

25 ALASKA:  At you.
   BLYTHE:  Oui.
   TARA:  Don't look at me. Nobody laughed at me.
   BLYTHE:  I do not want to be Crispin's assistant. I tell this to Mr. Wainwright, but he insists. But I do not want to look hideous and unattractive. So one day I wear my best dress. I look, how do you say…

   CHARITY:  Lovely? Stunning? Beautiful?
   BLYTHE:  Oui.
   TARA:  Thank you.
   BLYTHE:  Not you.

35 TARA:  Awwww.
   BLYTHE:  Just me. I am a vision of loveliness. All ze men will want to marry me. But Crispin is missing Molly, and he does not concentrate. He throws his knife and ruins my dress! It is in tatters.
ALASKA: That's a real Greek tragedy.

BLYTHE: I need to get a new dress, but I cannot buy one.

CHARITY: There was a big train wreck in York that day. All ze stores were closed.

BLYTHE: None to help me. I look horrible. I never want to work for Crispin again. But Mr. Wainwright force me. No man will want me as long as I work for Crispin.

ALASKA: So what?

BLYTHE: It might not matter to you, cowboy, but it matters to me. I know you don’t care about how you look.

ALASKA: Hey.

BLYTHE: But you don’t know what it’s like to be an orphan.

ALASKA: Hey. I am one!

PHOEBE: Easy.

BLYTHE: And no family ever wanted you?

ALASKA: So?

BLYTHE: I wonder why. Look at you.

ALASKA: What’s wrong with me?

BLYTHE: No family wanted you. No man will ever want you. You are no lady. You will grow old alone. (That hits ALASKA like a mule kick to the stomach.) I do not want that. I will find a man and have a family. (ALASKA stands still, hurt and shocked.)

PHOEBE: (Steps forward.) Alaska doesn’t need a man. She’s not a lace doily. And she already has a family. (Takes ALASKA’S hand.)

BLYTHE: Not a very good one. (ACROBATS giggles again.)

PHOEBE: That’s your opinion. (All business.) Well, I want to thank you all so much for your help. You’ve been a great assistance. Good day. (ACROBATS start to EXIT. PHOEBE calls after them.) Oh, one last thing. The color of those outfits is hideous. (ACROBATS shriek in horror, then EXIT trying to cover their outfits. PHOEBE offers a lace handkerchief to ALASKA, who wipes a hand angrily across her eyes.)

ALASKA: I don’t need it none. What is it anyway?

PHOEBE: A lace doily. (Both laugh.)

End of Scene One

ACT TWO

Scene Two

WIGGINS: (ENTERS RIGHT with ELZA as QUINN ENTERS LEFT. WIGGINS still wears deerstalker hat.) Hey, you two. What did you find— (Stops short when he sees ALASKA wipe her eyes.) What’s wrong?
PHOEBE: Nothing is wrong.

WIGGINS: Blimey! Are you cryin’?!

ALASKA: (Wipes her nose with the back of her hand and sniffs back her tears.) No. I ain’t cryin’ none. And shut up.

WIGGINS: I just ain’t never seen you cry before—

ELZA: Wiggins. Do shut up.

WIGGINS: Right. Sorry. Tell me what you found out. (ELZA, PHOEBE, ALASKA, WIGGINS and QUINN go into a huddle.)

OFFICER PELHAM: (Runs ON with OFFICER WILKES.) Inspector!

OFFICER WILKES: Inspe’or Lestrade!

OFFICER PELHAM: Inspector Lestrade! (Blows a police whistle.)

OFFICER WILKES: (Sees IRREGULARS.) Oi, wh’ areyu lo’ doon ‘ere, den?

PHOEBE: I do beg your pardon?

OFFICER PELHAM: He said, “What are you lot doing here, then?” You were told to push on!

LESTRADE: (ENTERS.) What’s all this then? (WAINWRIGHT rushes ON. CIRCUS CAST and EXTRAS ENTER and gather, nervous.)

OFFICER WILKES: (Accent thicker than ever.) Dokker gottus badnoos.

OFFICER PELHAM: Doctor gave us some bad news, sir.

OFFICER WILKES: Poison! (ALL gasp in shock.)

LESTRADE: What?

OFFICER WILKES: Sword swallower upsum badder pois.

OFFICER PELHAM: Sword swallower swallowed up some bad poison!

LESTRADE: So it was murder.

WAINWRIGHT: Murder?! (ELZA runs to WAINWRIGHT, who drapes a protective arm around her.)

OFFICER WILKES: Homes gah’ it uppimtoo.

OFFICER PELHAM: That ain’t all, sir. Sherlock Holmes was poisoned too! (More gasps and shock.)

WIGGINS: (Panic and runs forward.) Poisoned! Not Mr. Holmes!

LESTRADE: (Stops him with a firm but gentle hand.) Easy lad.

WIGGINS: Is he... Did he... Is he dead?

OFFICER WILKES: Nah’ ye’ tick-tock.

OFFICER PELHAM: Not yet, praise be. But the doctor said he don’t have much time. He’ll be dead by morning.

WIGGINS: No!

LESTRADE: Is there no hope?
OFFICER WILKES: They dunno wha’ or why or where’o...
OFFICER PELHAM: They don’t know what poison was used or how it got into his body. They’re running tests, but it don’t look good.
LESTRADE: All right, let the doctors do their work. We now have a murder to solve.
OFFICER WILKES: Two.
OFFICER PELHAM: Two murders.
WIGGINS: (Despondent.) No.
LESTRADE: All right, Wilkes, Mr. Holmes isn’t dead yet. Let’s crack on.
WIGGINS: (Revives.) Inspector, we have information—
LESTRADE: Not now, lad.
WIGGINS: But it might help.
LESTRADE: If you want to help, go see Mr. Holmes while you still have a chance.
WIGGINS: But—
LESTRADE: I don’t know if the hospital will let you in, but get away from here. All right, boys, double time. Mr. Wainwright, get everybody back into the big top.
WAINWRIGHT: Come, everyone, let’s go. Hurry on.

ELZA: Wiggins. (Tries to go to him in support.)
WAINWRIGHT: Elza, come along. (ELZA glances at WIGGINS, then EXITS. ALL but the IRREGULARS EXIT.)

PHOEBE: Mr. Holmes poisoned?
QUINN: How? Who did it? Why?
ALASKA: Come on. I know a shortcut to the hospital.
WIGGINS: No.
PHOEBE: What?
QUINN: Don’t you want to see Mr. Holmes?
WIGGINS: Are you a doctor? Can you help him? The best way to help Mr. Holmes is to solve this murder. We find out who poisoned him—
ALASKA: —we find the poison.
WIGGINS: Yes.
PHOEBE: And with the poison—
QUINN: They can make an antidote.
WIGGINS: Quite. We are the best chance Mr. Holmes has to stay alive. We solve this murder fast enough, we save Mr. Holmes!
FINNEGAN: (Runs ON.) Wiggins!
WIGGINS: Finnegan. Mr. Holmes has been—
FINNEGAN: Poisoned. I heard it all. What’s our play?
WIGGINS: Did you get what I asked?
FINNEGAN: Right here. (Opens a satchel and Pulls out a stack of newspapers. Each IRREGULAR Takes a few.) What are we lookin’ for then?
WIGGINS: Quinn said there was a museum fire. See if you can find anythin’ about that. (IRREGULARS scan through their newspapers, rifling quickly.)
ALASKA: Here. (Holds up her newspaper.)
WIGGINS: (Snags it and reads,) Right. Big museum fire in Leeds. Says a healthy bit of treasure got burned up in the flames. And they found an unidentified body in the ashes. What about the train wreck in York?
FINNEGAN: I remember that day. Sold a lot of papers. (Scans newspapers, frantic.) Here. (Reads.) Not only a train wreck, but half a ton in gold went missin’ from the train.
WIGGINS: I suspected as much. Where else did the circus play?
PHOEBE: Mayfair. (ALL scan the pages, frantic.)
QUINN: Got it. (Hands the paper to WIGGINS.) There was a big bank robbery there. Someone got away with twenty thousand pounds.
FINNEGAN: Twenty thousand quid. Blimey!
WIGGINS: Zolda said they couldn’t find a crystal ball in Manchester.
ALASKA: (More frantic scanning.) Manchester. Manchester.
QUINN: Manchester.
PHOEBE: Here! A jewelry store got robbed in Manchester last year.
FINNEGAN: I remember that. Someone pinched a handful of priceless diamonds.
PHOEBE: Oh, my.
QUINN: What? What does it mean?
FINNEGAN: Are you thinkin’?
IRREGULARS: (Call OFFSTAGE in all directions.) Inspector! Police! Inspector Lestrade!
LESTRADE: (ENTERS with OFFICERS, WAINWRIGHT and ELZA.) What’s all this then? Pipe down.
WIGGINS: Inspector, we have evidence—
LESTRADE: What did I tell you lot about interfering?
WIGGINS: Please listen!
LESTRADE: Get them out of here.
ALASKA: Listen to him, you ignorant snake.

LESTRADÉ: Ignorant am I? Get them gone. (OFFICERS PELHAM and WILKES start to wave the IRREGULARS STAGE LEFT.)

OFFICER WILKES: Move on, ye gu’errats.

OFFICER PELHAM: Come along, off with you. (Ad-libbed commotion as the IRREGULARS are corralled. LESTRADÉ leads WAINWRIGHT and ELZA STAGE RIGHT.)

WIGGINS: Inspector! Who died in the museum fire in Leeds?!

LESTRADÉ: (Stops and turns.) What did you say?

WIGGINS: You found a body in that museum fire. It wasn’t a woman, was it? It was a girl.

LESTRADÉ: How did you know that? That’s police evidence. We didn’t tell anybody about that.

WIGGINS: I can help you, Inspector.

LESTRADÉ: You are going to help yourself into the clink if you had something to do with that. Officers, round them up. (OFFICERS try to grab IRREGULARS.)

WIGGINS: Leg it! (After a brief skirmish with OFFICERS, IRREGULARS rush OFF LEFT.)

LESTRADÉ: (Calls OFF.) And stay out of my investigation! (To WAINWRIGHT.) Come along, Mr. Wainwright. We have a murderer to catch. (OFFICERS, LESTRADÉ and WAINWRIGHT EXIT. ELZA starts to follow them.)

End of Scene Two

ACT TWO

Scene Three

Before ELZA EXITS, IRREGULARS sneak back ON LEFT.

WIGGINS: Elza. Elza!

ELZA: (Turns back.) Wiggins. What are you doing?!

WIGGINS: I think I know what happened.

ELZA: You do?

WIGGINS: Yes. It’s so bloody simple, it’s genius.

ELZA: Don’t treat me like I’m stupid. Just tell me.

WIGGINS: First, we heard about a museum fire. Then a train wreck. That got me thinkin’. Every place the circus played, a major crime took place. I think somebody is using the circus as a cover.

ELZA: To commit crimes?

WIGGINS: Yes. Even more, I think that Crispin found out and was tryin’ to prove it.

ELZA: What? How? This is crazy.
WIGGINS: People said Crispin was a good man. Until Molly run off. But everybody said he loved Molly and she loved him, so why did she run off?

ELZA: I don’t know.

WIGGINS: I don’t think she did. The clowns said Crispin would take Molly sightseein’ in every town. Like to see parks and galleries and museums. That was her what got burned up in that museum fire. Crispin didn’t know for sure and went off his nut tryin’ to find out what happened. He went to Madam Balazar to look into her crystal ball, but she couldn’t help him. Look here. *(Shows her a newspaper.)* Big bank robbery in Mayfair. *(Reads.)* “A figure was seen escapin’ on black horse with a white star on its forehead.”

ELZA: One of our horses?

WIGGINS: Star. Piper said they found Crispin in Star’s stall. Flat on the ground he was.

ELZA: Maybe he fell.

WIGGINS: What if he didn’t? What if he was on the ground to look at the horse’s hooves, seein’ if Star had been runnin’ on cobbled streets? But he spooked the horse, and Piper ran him off with her whip.

ELZA: So you think Crispin uncovered this plot.

WIGGINS: And then was poisoned for it. A simple drop on the end of his sword. He swallows it and zap—Bob’s your uncle!

ELZA: How did Mr. Holmes get poisoned? He surely didn’t swallow a sword.

WIGGINS: I don’t know. Yet.

ELZA: You don’t know, but you are certain about the rest.

WIGGINS: Not exactly, but it’s “a logical deduction based on the evidence at hand.” That’s what Mr. Holmes always does. To prove it, I need your help.

ELZA: My help. For what?

WIGGINS: I need to see your father’s books.

ELZA: My father?!

WIGGINS: The books will tell us the exact date they were in each town. If those dates match up to the crimes—

ELZA: Then you think my father is a master criminal?

WIGGINS: I just want you—

ELZA: To help you send my father to prison?

WIGGINS: I know it’s a lot to ask.
ELZA: No. No, I can’t. I won’t. Even if I wanted to, I couldn’t help you. He keeps those books on him at all times. In the briefcase he always carries.

WIGGINS: Can you get it from him?

ELZA: No. Wiggins, I won’t. You’ve gone off your rocker.

WIGGINS: Elza, I think I’m right.

ELZA: You think? You think? You want me accuse my father of being a criminal because you think. You want me to betray him?

WIGGINS: Elza, listen. I know how you feel about your father.

ELZA: No. You don’t have one. You don’t know how even thinking this would break his heart.

WIGGINS: I know you wear his ring proudly, and you want to be just like him. Believe me, I know.

ELZA: No, you don’t.

WIGGINS: I do. I understand because—

ELZA: (Nearly screams.) You are not Sherlock Holmes! (That hits WIGGINS hard.) I’m sorry, Wiggins, but you’re wrong.

WIGGINS: Elza—

ELZA: You’re always wrong! Everything you’ve ever “deduced” has been wrong. And now you want me to accuse my father. I will not break his heart because a bunch of gutter rats have a hunch. (WIGGINS is stunned silent. Softens.) I liked you, Wiggins. I did. But you are not a great detective. (Runs OFF. WIGGINS, still stunned, slowly Takes off the deerstalker hat and throws it as far as he can.)

PHOEBE: Wiggins? (No response.) Wiggins? Are you all right?

WIGGINS: (Defeated.) I try to be like him. I try to follow his ways. But I just… I… Now, Mr. Holmes may die because I’m not… I’m not… I’m not like him. (Sits in defeat. Other IRREGULARS do too. Only PHOEBE tries to shore them up.)

PHOEBE: We can’t give up.

FINNEGAN: What can we do then, eh?

PHOEBE: I don’t know.

ALASKA: Maybe they’re right about us. Maybe we are just gutter rats.

PHOEBE: We are not.

WIGGINS: Well, we sure ain’t normal.

PHOEBE: Who cares about normal? Sherlock Holmes is respected by all of Scotland Yard. He Could’ve called a hundred policemen to help him solve this crime. But he didn’t, Wiggins. He called you. He didn’t ask Inspector Lestrade. He didn’t even call Doctor Watson home. He trusted you, Wiggins. You. I don’t care if people think I’m not normal. I’m proud to be irregular. We are not gutter
rats. (To FINNEGAN.) We are not too poor. (To ALASKA.) Or too boyish. (To QUINN.) Or too stupid or frail. We are more than that. Sherlock Holmes put his life in your hands, Wiggins. Now what are we gonna do?

WIGGINS: I don’t... I’m not sure... I don’t know what to do.

PHOEBE: Yes, you do.

WIGGINS: Phoebe, I don’t know what Mr. Holmes would do.

PHOEBE: Then stop trying to be him. What would Wiggins do?

WIGGINS: (Fueled by PHOEBE’S words, gets to his feet and paces.) Maybe the problem is we been splittin’ up. Maybe I ain’t a great detective.

PHOEBE: Wiggins—

WIGGINS: It’s okay. ’Cause maybe we are. We put our heads together, and we think we know what happened.

QUINN: Right.

WIGGINS: Now we need proof.

ALASKA: We gotta see those books. See if the circus was in town when all those crimes took place.

WIGGINS: We can do this, but it’ll take all of us. Together. We need the “faintin’ fight fan.”

FINNEGAN: Blimey, we haven’t done that in a while.

PHOEBE: Everybody know what to do? Then let’s go. (ALASKA and FINNEGAN square off, toe to toe, as the OTHERS shout OFF.)

WIGGINS: Fight!

QUINN: Help, help, there’s a fight.

PHOEBE: Police! We need the police!

QUINN: (Screaming continues. Finally.) Here they come!

ALASKA: (To FINNEGAN.) I’ll try not to hurt you. (Winks, then yells.) You lousy, no-good, leprechaun!

FINNEGAN: You dirty, Yankee cowboy!

LESTRADE: (Runs ON.) What’s all this then?!

ALASKA: (OFFICERS, CIRCUS CAST and EXTRAS ENTER just as ALASKA and FINNEGAN begin to wrestle with lots of yelling.) Ahhh!

LESTRADE: Kids are nothing but a bother. Break it up! (OFFICERS unsuccessfully try to pull FINNEGAN and ALASKA apart. PHEOBE runs to WAINWRIGHT.)

PHOEBE: Oh, Mr. Wainwright, I do abhor violence. And the sight of blood... oh... (Pretends to faint. WAINWRIGHT drops his case to catch her. QUINN grabs it and runs it to WIGGINS.)
WAINWRIGHT: Stop! Thief!
LESTRADE: Stop him! (A mad chase ensues for a few seconds. WIGGINS is captured by OFFICERS. They hand the case to LESTRADE.)
OFFICER WILKES: Gah’ imser.
OFFICER PELHAM: Got him, sir.
LESTRADE: Why, you little rat!
ALASKA: Listen up, you snake. The circus is a front. Every town they visit a major crime happens, and they just move on.
WAINWRIGHT: That’s ridiculous.
WIGGINS: The body in the museum fire. That was a girl named Molly. (Gasps from the CIRCUS CAST.)
WAINWRIGHT: That’s slander that is, boy.
PHOEBE: Not if it’s true.
QUINN: Check the books and see if the dates match. (LESTRADE opens the case and Pulls out a ledger.) Look at March 15th, the day of the museum fire.
LESTRADE: (Flips pages in the ledger.) Aye. The circus was in Leeds.
WAINWRIGHT: What? Let me see that. (Takes the ledger.)
PHOEBE: (Checks a newspaper.) June 17th in Mayfair?
WAINWRIGHT: (Licks a finger and turns a page.) Yes, we were there at that time.
FINNEGAN: (Looks at his newspaper.) July 21st in Manchester.
WAINWRIGHT: (Licks his finger, turns a page.) Yes.
ALASKA: (Off her newspaper.) August 15th in York.
WAINWRIGHT: (Licks his finger and turns a page.) Yes. My goodness. Inspector, can this be true? (Licks his finger and turns another page. Another lick, another page. Another lick.)
LESTRADE: Now, boy—
PHOEBE: A moment, Inspector. He’s thinking.
WIGGINS: (Paces a second or two.) Of course. Of course! It’s all so bloody elementary. (Grabs the book from WAINWRIGHT and crosses to ELZA.) Here, Elza. Take the book.
ELZA: I don’t… I don’t want it.
WIGGINS: Take it and read a page.
ELZA: This is crazy.
WIGGINS: Any page.
ELZA: I don’t want to!
WIGGINS: Take the book! (ELZA backs away, her hands up.)
WAINWRIGHT: What is going on? Why are you badgering my child?

WIGGINS: The poison! The poison is in the ink! (WIGGINS tosses the book to LESTRADE.) Mr. Holmes must’ve looked at these books. Licked his finger, just like Mr. Wainwright here. That’s why his fingers was so black. That’s how the poison got into his system.

LESTRADE: If that’s the case, then this is the poison.

PHOEBE: The antidote!

LESTRADE: (Gives book to OFFICER WILKES.) Get this to the hospital right bloody well now! (OFFICER WILKES runs OFF with the book.)

WIGGINS: (Turns to WAINWRIGHT.) But you didn’t know that about the ink, did you? Or you wouldn’t have licked your own finger. You didn’t know anythin’ about this.

WAINWRIGHT: No! Of course not.

LESTRADE: You should get to the hospital yourself, sir.

WAINWRIGHT: Not until I understand what’s happening here.

QUINN: But if he didn’t do it, who did?

FINNEGAN: Somebody else has been keepin’ the books.

QUINN: But who?

WIGGINS: The one who could practically run the business now. Your daughter, Elza Wainwright. (Shocked gasps all around. ELZA stands a moment, then runs but is caught by LESTRADE and OFFICER PELHAM, who hold her as she sneers at WIGGINS.) You run the books, don’t you, Elza? How else could you know that Madam Balazar Makes up 12 percent of revenue?

WAINWRIGHT: This is insane. Are you saying my daughter poisoned me?

FINNEGAN: I bet the poison was meant for Mr. Holmes.

WAINWRIGHT: She couldn’t have known. She wouldn’t let me lick my finger, taste the poison. She’s my daughter. I’m her father.

PHOEBE: The books looked to be in a woman’s writing.

WAINWRIGHT: This has been going on for years. It would take a criminal mastermind. She’s not that clever.

ELZA: (Cold.) Be quiet.

WAINWRIGHT: She’s not a genius. Tell them, Elza.

ELZA: (Ice cold.) Quiet.

WAINWRIGHT: I know her. Inspector, believe me, she’s not smart enough to do this.

ELZA: Stop it!

WAINWRIGHT: She doesn’t have the brains to do something like this.

Believe me, I know. I’m her father—
ELZA: You are not my father, you old fool! (Shocked gasps.) Do you have any idea how long we’ve been planning all this?

LESTRADE: We?

WIGGINS: She and her real father.

WAINWRIGHT: What? Her real father is dead.

WIGGINS: No, he ain’t. Is he, Elza?

ELZA: (Icicles.) How did you know?

WIGGINS: Your ring. The Irish crown in the setting is upside down. That means it ain’t a W. It’s an M. M for Moriarty. (ALL gasp again.)

ELZA: Not bad, Wiggins. I am the daughter of Professor James Moriarty, the greatest criminal mind of our time.

WAINWRIGHT: But, Elza, darling.

ELZA: I am not your darling, you sad old man. My real father and I have been planning this for years! More crimes using the silly circus as a cover than you’ll ever find.

WAINWRIGHT: But how?

ELZA: Do you really think I go to boarding school? I am spending all that time with my father. My real, genius father.

WIGGINS: In Brighton.

ELZA: Yes. Very good, Wiggins. I underestimated you. I do spend time in Brighton. I do wear glasses, but Father disapproves. (Holds up her left hand.) And I am left handed, but Father’s cane cured me of that.

WIGGINS: Everythin’ you know you learned from your father.

ELZA: You listened.

PHOEBE: That’s why she was with you, Wiggins.

FINNEGAN: To keep an eye on our investigation.

ALASKA: And when we started to figure it out, she tried to get you off the case.

ELZA: Except for the boarding school, you were right on all counts, Wiggins.

LESTRADE: Take her away, lads.

ELZA: You can’t hold me. My father will come for me! You have not heard the last of the Moriartys! (OFFICER PELHAM drags her OFF LEFT.)

LESTRADE: And get Mr. Wainwright to the hospital. (Some CIRCUS CAST lead a shocked WAINWRIGHT OFF LEFT. LESTRADE turns to IRREGULARS.) Well, well, well. I see you pay no mind to Scotland Yard.
QUINN: Are you mad? Are you going to arrest us? Throw us in the clink? Put us on a chain gang?
LESTRADE: I shouldn’t think so, but this is most irregular. Most irregular, indeed.
WIGGINS: That’s us, Inspector. We’re just the Baker Street Irregulars.
FINNEGAN: Blimey.
PHOEBE: I like that. (General celebration from IRREGULARS.)
LESTRADE: Anyway, I reckon we solved a murder and a lot of other crimes. And saved the life of Sherlock Holmes. I may get a promotion out of all of this.
ALASKA: You?
LESTRADE: Don’t worry. I’ll be sure to mention you in my reports. Now, if I was you, I’d go see Mr. Holmes. That’s just a friendly suggestion, not an order. (IRREGULARS start to leave, but LESTRADE stops them.) Hey. (Picks up the deerstalker hat and tosses it to WIGGINS.) You forgot your hat, boy.
WIGGINS: Oh. It’s not mine.
LESTRADE: Sure about that, are you? I’d say you earned it. (With a dramatic and proud flourish, WIGGINS puts on the deerstalker hat. IRREGULARS cheer.)
IRREGULARS: Hooray!
FINNEGAN: Hip hip.
ALL: Hooray!
FINNEGAN: Hip hip.
ALL: Hooray! (As ALL cheer and pat WIGGINS on the back, the LIGHTS FADE to BLACK. CURTAIN.)
END OF PLAY
PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES ONSTAGE
Large placard reading “Wainwright Circus,” colorful banners, bench, barrels or crates. Optional small circus tent.

PROPERTIES BROUGHT ON

ACT ONE

Scene One:
   Rope (ALASKA)
   Newspapers (FINNEGAN)
   Magnifying glass (WIGGINS)

Scene Two:
   Briefcase with ledgers inside (WAINWRIGHT)
   Stretcher with a covered body, deerstalker hat and a slip of paper
       (OFFICER PELHAM, OFFICER WILKES)

Scene Three:
   Ring (ELZA)

Scene Four:
   Wood plank, horn (CRANK)

Scene Five:
   Whip (PIPER)
   Wheelbarrow, brooms, rakes (FESS, DIGGER)
   Clothespin (FESS)

Scene Six:
   Tarot cards (ZOLDA)

Scene Seven:
   Food tray with sausages and buns, coins (HAWKER)

ACT TWO

Scene One:
   Lace handkerchief (PHOEBE)

Scene Two:
   Police whistle (OFFICER PELHAM)
   Satchel filled with old newspapers (FINNEGAN)

Scene Three:
   Briefcase with ledgers inside (WAINWRIGHT)

ABOUT COSTUMING

Often times, when you have a large cast of young actors, they can blur together in an audience’s mind. We try very hard to give each character a unique voice so everybody stands out.
For this reason, we set this in a circus. This gives us a single set and a chance to costume each group in their own easily-recognizable styles: clowns, acrobats and animal trainers. Costumes like these that are outside the normal “street clothes” of a character help separate performers in an audience’s mind.

There are plenty of on-line pictures of old time circus performers to inspire your costume choices, and most can be made, rented or borrowed without breaking your budget. Likewise, the same can be said for the street children and the police of late 1800s in London.

FLEXIBLE CASTING
The parts of OFFICER WILKES, OFFICER PELHAM, JINGLES, CRANK and HAWKER may be played as either male or female characters. You can add as many police and other circus performers as needed. These characters help create a larger circus and enhance the atmosphere.

NOTE ON DIALECT
If possible, all characters should speak with some form of a British accent unless otherwise specified in the character description. Keep in mind the “three C’s” of dialect: correctness, consistency and clarity. A young actor should be able to maintain a relative accurate and understandable dialect for the entire show. Otherwise, it is distracting and better to not use an accent at all.

In this particular show, however, it is a necessity for Blythe to have a good French accent and for Charity to have a poorly done French accent. Zolda should have a distinctly different sounding accent than everyone else’s. Wilkes is simply unintelligible in his accent.

ABOUT THE BAKER STREET IRREGULARS
The original Irregulars were a group of fictional characters featured in the Sherlock Holmes stories. They were a group of street children, headed by a boy named Wiggins, that helped Holmes out from time to time. They first appeared in Conan Doyle’s original Sherlock Holmes story A Study in Scarlet (written 1886, published 1887). They also appear in his next novel, The Sign of the Four, and one of the chapters from this book is called The Baker Street Irregulars.

Since then, the Irregulars have become literary icons. They’ve appeared in movies including Without a Clue starring Michael Caine and Ben Kingsley. They also had their own film called Sherlock Holmes and the Baker Street Irregulars starring Jonathan Pryce. You can see them in comic books and a wonderful series of young adult novels by Tracy Mack and Michael Citrin.

Wiggins seems to be the only character that appears consistently, with other members of the gang created as needed. We hope you enjoy this theatrical version of the Irregulars. As is often the case, teens see what adults sometimes miss. Crack on!
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