A DANGEROUS PASTIME

By Jeff Dunne

CHARACTERS

WATSON   Dr. John Watson

SHERLOCK   Mr. Sherlock Holmes

SETTING

The library at 221 B Baker Street.

This script is the result of a "Three by Three" prompt to write a short play, ideally under three minutes, on the theme of Attachment, and using the following:

Prop: a musical instrument
Place: a library
Line: "I'm having a terrible time finding a rhyme for 'dangerous'."

SCENE

(Watson is sitting at a writing desk in the library while Sherlock lounges in a large, overstuffed chair and plunks out disturbingly-atonal strands from his violin.)

WATSON

Honestly, Sherlock, this has to have been the dumbest idea you've ever generated.

SHERLOCK

Not at all, Watson. It's certain to liven up the readership.

WATSON

The readership is just fine.

SHERLOCK

Nonsense. You were obviously upset when you had two cancellations yesterday.

WATSON

It's just that—

SHERLOCK

And I'm worried how you'll react when you open that letter on sill and discover that it's a third cancellation for the Daily Herald.

WATSON

How on Earth could you—

SHERLOCK

It's simplicity itself, my good man. Notice the small indentation on the—

WATSON

Don't. Just don't.

SHERLOCK

You really are in a mood, aren't you?

WATSON

This is inane. Utter absurdity.

SHERLOCK

Not at all.

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WATSON

How in the world do you think that writing one of your adventures in iambic pentameter could possibly bolster the distribution of our column?

SHERLOCK

People like verse.

WATSON

Nonsense. On Tuesday you railed at me for nearly fifteen minutes suggesting you open a sartorial emporium to clean out your bathroom. And I still maintain that *Holmes Combs* is not at all a foolish name for such an establishment.

SHERLOCK

Perhaps not, but it isn't to my taste. People may like verse, dear Watson, but it doesn't mean that I suffer from the same affliction.

WATSON

Well, it's devilishly difficult. And you are absolutely no help at all.

SHERLOCK

My good doctor, our duties are clearly delineated. I solve the crimes, and you document the process. If I were to begin documenting the process, it would undermine the entire system.

WATSON

Well, the whole system may very well already be undone, Sherlock. I'm having a terrible time finding a rhyme for 'dangerous', and I can hardly describe the damn Baskerville hounds as cuddly.

SHERLOCK

Honestly, John, you simply aren't trying.

WATSON

I *am*. Nothing rhymes with 'dangerous'.

SHERLOCK

Manger bus.

WATSON

What?

SHERLOCK

'Manger bus' rhymes with dangerous.

WATSON

And how on this good Earth am I supposed to work in the phrase 'manger bus'?!

SHERLOCK

How should I know? I haven't read what you have thus far.

WATSON

Well certainly nothing about *mangers*. Or busses.

SHERLOCK

Stranger pus?

WATSON

Don't be disgusting.

SHERLOCK

Ranger fuss.

(Watson gives Sherlock a dirty look.)

Nothing's ever good enough for you, is it? 'Ranger fuss' could easily be worked into the poem. Surely you recall that good woodsman who showed us around the property? Well, we certainly made a fuss for him, didn't we?

WATSON

That's it.

SHERLOCK

Watson!

WATSON

No. That's it. I'm not doing this anymore. It was your stupid idea in the first place, and if the only thing you can contribute is your wry sense of morbidity, then you can just forget it.

SHERLOCK

Please. I was not being morbid in the least.

WATSON

No. I'm finished. I'm going down to McKenzie's Pub for a pint, and no, I won't bring you back anything no matter how nicely you ask.

(Watson exits. While doing so, Sherlock calls out.)

SHERLOCK

Granger Gus!

WATSON (OFF)

I'm not listening!

SHERLOCK

No, seriously! A granger is someone who operates a farm, and so—

WATSON (OFF)

Goodbye, Sherlock!

(A door slams. Sherlock pauses for a long moment, then the door opens again.)

What do you—

SHERLOCK

A pint of Guinness and a bag of chips if you don't mind, my good chap!

(The door slams shut again. Sherlock considers it for a moment, then…)

I think 'manger bus' would work rather nicely, actually.

(Lights out.)

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