

MISS STAPLETON. How do you do. You must think I'm *awfully* silly. We've been talking at cross-purposes.

WATSON. A natural mistake.

STAPLETON. Come, my dear. Let's show the doctor our little abode. We can have some tea to warm us up.

WATSON. May I ask you a question? Why do you live in this part of the world? It's so lonely. Almost primeval.

STAPLETON. We had a school in the north country for a time, but alas, the fates were against us. An epidemic broke out and three of the boys died. There were no accusations, of course, but the school never quite recovered, and much of my capital was swallowed up. With what was left we bought Merripit House and now we're quite fond of the wait ... *wait! There it is again! Shh! It's a Blue Cyclops!* Do you mind if I – ?

(He dashes off.)

I won't be long this time!!

(When BERYL is sure that her brother is gone, she turns to WATSON.)

MISS STAPLETON. Doctor, I'm sorry to have mistaken you for Sir Henry.

WATSON. Not at all. But why are you so eager to get him away from here?

MISS STAPLETON. I-I know about the curse, that's all ...

WATSON. Please be frank with me, Miss Stapleton. Ever since I've been here I've been conscious of shadows everywhere. This world of yours seems all mud and darkness with no trail to follow and with patches of danger to suck you in.

MISS STAPLETON. *(in despair)* But that's what life is, Doctor. There is nothing else. There is no escape.

(MISS STAPLETON chokes back a sob. At which moment, SIR HENRY comes up the path.)

SIR HENRY. Hello? Doctor Watson? Y'know I get mighty tired of just settin' there doin' paperwork with you out here havin' a good –

(SIR HENRY sees MISS STAPLETON and is struck dumb with admiration. She, on her side, has the same reaction. It's love at first sight. It's as though there's a piano wire pulled tight between their eyes, tense and resonant, and they simply can't stop staring at each other. WATSON sees it. He might even wave his hand and get no reaction. Or he might step around the "wire" as if it's really there. SIR HENRY finally stammers something out:)

SIR HENRY. Hi. I mean how do you do. My name is oh my lord you have beautiful eyes. I mean, I shouldn't a' said that, should I?

MISS STAPLETON. Oh no! Of course you should! I mean it's quite all right. I'm Miss Stapleton. Beryl. I live here on your moor. Your moor. I mean the moors. Because they're so beautiful. I'm being silly again.

SIR HENRY. Again? Now when were you ever silly?

MISS STAPLETON. Just a minute ago. I was telling Doctor Watson that you should leave here. But I told *him* to leave because I thought he was you. But he isn't you, is he?

SIR HENRY. No he's not.

WATSON. She was very upset. She insisted.

MISS STAPLETON. You make too much of it, Doctor. My brother and I were shocked by the death of Sir Charles, so when his heir came to live here, I became distressed.

SIR HENRY. (*happily*) You were distressed for me?

MISS STAPLETON. Yes, I was. I am. You must go away for your own sake. Why live in a place that has been fatal to your family, a place of danger?

SIR HENRY. Because it *is* a place of danger. That makes life interestin'. Besides, maybe now it's a place of somethin' else. Or am I mistaken?

MISS STAPLETON. No. I think you are not mistaken. And yet it's foolish! You should go back while you have the chance! The danger here is *very real* and it's not

something to laugh off because of momentary feelings of –

(Suddenly, there is a howl in the distance and they all look up. It's a long, low moan, incredibly sad. Then it swells into a deep, almost satanic roar. MISS STAPLETON turns pale.)

There it is. That's the hound.

(The hound cries out again and its hideous howl echoes across the moors.)

It never stops! It howls and cries and brings nothing but death!

(It continues to howl and she becomes hysterical.)

It's not a myth, it can hurt people and kill them and make them suffer!

SIR HENRY. Beryl!

WATSON. Miss Stapleton!

MISS STAPLETON. *Go back! Please listen to me! Save yourself! I beg of you! You'll be killed!*

(Another horrible howl and MISS STAPLETON screams and faints dead away in SIR HENRY's arms. WATSON and SIR HENRY are dumbfounded.)

(The jangled tonalities of the Dies Irae from Benjamin Britten's War Requiem take us straight into:)

Scene Fourteen: 221B Baker Street

HOLMES. *Cartwright! Milker!*

(HOLMES is sitting in a chair with his back to us.)

CARTWRIGHT. *(off)* We're right 'ere, sir! We're on the way up!

(MILKER enters without CARTWRIGHT.)

HOLMES. Do you have the letter?!