

# **The Baker Street Kids**

**THE CASE OF THE RIVERBANK CHASE**

**A Sherlock Holmes mystery  
in one act for youth groups**

**by Dave Buchanan**

**Spotlight Publications**

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**Email: [enquiries@spotlightpublications.com](mailto:enquiries@spotlightpublications.com)**

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# **The Baker Street Kids**

## **THE CASE OF THE RIVERBANK CHASE**

### **CAST**

**Sherlock Holmes**

**Doctor Watson**

**Mrs Hudson**

### **The Kids:**

<b>Wiggins</b>	<b>Alice</b>
<b>Smiler</b>	<b>Liza</b>
<b>Badger</b>	<b>Lily</b>
<b>Benjie</b>	<b>Mary</b>
<b>Sammy</b>	<b>Lettie</b>
<b>Calvin</b>	<b>Maggie</b>

Setting - A split set: Holmes's lodgings R & the kids' den L  
Various external locations, mainly the Thames riverbank

Time - Victorian London, 1890, midsummer

### **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

**Prologue** - front of tabs

**Scene 1** - Sherlock Holmes's sitting room

**Scene 2** - front of tabs

**Scene 3** - the kids' den

**Scene 4** - the same

**Scene 5** - front of tabs

**Scene 6** - the riverbank

**Scene 7** - another part of the riverbank

**Scene 8** - Smith's boatyard

**Scene 9** - the riverbank

**Scene 10** - another part of the riverbank

**Scene 11** - Smith's boatyard

**Scene 12** - front of tabs

**Scene 13** - outside the Tower of London

**Scene 14** - same as Scene 1

## **THE CHARACTERS**

**Sherlock Holmes** - The great detective, master of disguise and deductive reasoning.

**Doctor Watson** - Holmes's colleague, and narrator, loyal and plodding.

**Mrs Hudson** - The housekeeper, fussy and bustling.

### **The Boys**

**Wiggins** - The leader & organiser, resourceful and likeable.

**Badger & Smiler** - The backbone of the gang, typically boyish.

**Sammy** - A food fanatic.

**Benjie** - A bit of a loner and moody, but finds redemption with Maggie.

**Calvin** - The youngest, cheeky and a bit naïve.

### **The Girls**

**Alice** - The leader, streetwise and feisty.

**Liza** - Second-in-command, a bit headstrong but genuine.

**Lily, Lettie & Mary** - Backbone of the girls' gang.

**Maggie** - The youngest, has a nice cameo with Benjie.

**NB.** All the kids, plus Mrs Hudson, are cockneys, whereas Holmes and Watson talk 'posh' (though Holmes has a cockney bit to do as the pedlar).

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

See page 38.

## **NOTE ON MONEY AND ITS VALUE**

See page 39.

## THE CASE OF THE RIVERBANK CHASE

*There are two scenes set upstage:*

*R is Holmes's sitting room, which may be minimal. All that is required is some period furniture, perhaps a table and two small chairs, and an armchair. A newspaper on the table*

*L is the kids' den. There are a number of packing cases in the background, and some boxes for use as seats*

*Downstage should be kept clear for the various other scenes. Tabs may be used as required, or simple front lighting. One large streetlamp is needed for the riverbank scenes. See Production Notes page 38*

### Prologue

*A spotlight DR, in it Dr Watson, with a book in his hand*

**Watson** This is an extract from the journals of yours truly John Watson MD, being an account of the extraordinary sequence of events which I have designated 'The Case Of The Riverbank Chase'. I was seated one morning just after breakfast in my favourite armchair taking a nap (in the lodgings I share at 221b Baker Street, Marylebone with my colleague Sherlock Holmes) when my reverie was shattered by a knocking on the door and the shrill tones of our landlady Mrs Hudson ...

*The spot fades on Watson and lights come up on the sitting room R*

### Scene 1

*Watson is discovered in the armchair snoring when suddenly there is a loud knock on the door*

*He wakes up as Mrs Hudson bustles in R*

**Mrs Hudson** Doctor, doctor, what shall I do? What shall I do?

**Watson** *(rising)* Calm down, Mrs Hudson, and tell me what is the matter?

**Mrs Hudson** There's a bunch of ruffians downstairs, doctor, and I don't know what to make of them, I really don't, so help me.

**Watson** A bunch of ruffians, you say?

**Mrs Hudson** Yeh, a right bunch of tearaways ...

**Watson** Are they threatening you?

**Mrs Hudson** *(after a pause)* No.

**Watson** Are they damaging the property?

**Mrs Hudson** *(another pause)* No.

**Watson** Well what then?

**Mrs Hudson** I don't really know. I told them to go away but they wouldn't ...

**Watson** Shall I get the police?

**Mrs Hudson** No, I don't think that'll be necessary.

**Watson** What do they want?

**Mrs Hudson** They want to see Mr Holmes ... oh, and I've just remembered, they gave me this.

*She hands him a note which he reads*

**Watson** *(after a while)* Ah. *(Smiling)* My dear Mrs Hudson, tell them to come in.

**Mrs Hudson** What? Do you know them, doctor?

**Watson** Indeed. They are here to assist Mr Holmes. Please.

**Mrs Hudson** Well I never did.

*She makes to go out, then turns back*

If you're sure, doctor ...  
**Watson** Quite sure.

*She exits R*

*Watson has a quick glance at a newspaper. Presently there is another knock*

Come in.

*Mrs Hudson enters*

**Mrs Hudson** Right, you lot, in! And don't even think about touching anything. And I mean anything!

*Six scruffy looking street urchins come in rather sheepishly, looking round them all the while at their surroundings. They are: Wiggins, Smiler, Calvin, Benjie, Sammy and Badger*

**Badger** Cor, just look at this place!

**Smiler** Get a load of them pictures.

**Calvin** Are you a toff, mister?

**Wiggins** Shut up!

*They form a ragged line in front of Watson*

**Watson** Ah Wiggins, so these are your troops, are they?

**Wiggins** Yes, guv'.

**Watson** That'll be all, Mrs Hudson.

**Mrs Hudson** (*moving off reluctantly*) Just make sure they don't touch anything ...

**Watson** I will, thank you, Mrs Hudson.

*She finally exits R*

*As she does, the sound of a violin's plaintive wailing is heard*

**Badger** 'Ere, wot's that 'orrible noise?

**Watson** That 'orrible noise' is Mr Sherlock Holmes playing his violin. I shall tell him you have arrived.

*Watson exits UR*

**Wiggins** Why can't you shut your gob, Badger?

**Badger** Well I didn't know it was Mr 'Olmes, did I?

**Wiggins** (*smiling*) It is a bit 'orrible, isn't it?

*They all laugh and cover their ears etc.*

*The noise eventually subsides*

**Calvin** (*pointing off R*) They're coming!

*The boys quickly line up again as Sherlock Holmes comes in followed by Watson*

**Holmes** Ah there they are. The Baker Street Irregulars. Do you remember we used them once before, Watson?

**Watson** Indeed. The Earl of Stanford case?

**Holmes** Correct. So Wiggins, you got my wire then?

**Wiggins** Yeh, I did, Mr 'Olmes, and I got them here quick as I could.

**Holmes** Expenses?

**Wiggins** Half a crown'll cover it, guv'.

**Holmes** Here. (*Hands him a coin*) But where are the others?

**Wiggins** What others, guv'?

**Holmes** We shall need a dozen, for what I have in mind.

**Wiggins** This is all that was available, guv'.

**Holmes** Then you must get more. Now listen, I have a most important job for you boys. You are to keep a look-out for a boat called the *Aurora*. It's a steam launch - black with two red streaks and a white band on the funnel. Got that?

**Wiggins** Steam launch named *Aurora* - white band on the funnel. Oh, and black with two red streaks.

**Smiler** Where do we look for it, guv'?

**Holmes** It was last seen at a wharf at Millbank, owned by a Mr Smith who hires it out. One boy is to be stationed at the wharf while the others are to search all wharves and landing-stages from Lambeth Bridge to Woolwich, on both sides of the river. Wiggins, I leave it to you to arrange all details. Now boys, if you catch sight of the *Aurora* you are to report to Wiggins, who will telegraph me instantly. Usual rate of pay - one shilling each per day. Here you are.

*He hands out money to the delighted boys*

And an additional six shillings for the other six boys, Wiggins.

*He gives more cash to Wiggins*

And a guinea shall go to the boy who spots the launch.

*The boys look at each other with delight*

Any questions?

*The boys mumble negatively*

Well then on your way - we have only ten hours of daylight left.

**Watson** Yes come along, boys, chop chop!

**Calvin** Chop? Chop what, mister?

*The boys laugh and Wiggins mouths "Shut up" to Calvin*

*The boys start to go*

**Holmes** Wait, I almost forgot. I have a warning for you.

**Wiggins** Warning, guv'?

**Holmes** Yes, of a man you may encounter. Not the owner of the boat, who is a small fat man and harmless, but its passenger. You are to avoid approaching him at all costs.

**Calvin** Is he a robber?

**Sammy** Is he wanted by the rozzers, mister?

**Watson** He is a blackguard, a thief and a murderer!

*The boys react with genuine shock*

**Wiggins** Wot's he look like, Mr 'Olmes?

**Holmes** He is tall, bearded and walks with a pronounced limp. Remember, boys, he is dangerous and may be armed.

*More shock reaction*

**Smiler** Wot's his moniker, Mr 'Olmes?

**Holmes** His name is Jeremiah Grogan. Now then, be off with you.

*The boys troop out, as they do ...*

**Badger** 'Ow we gonna get six more boys, Wiggy?

**Wiggins** Don't worry, we'll get them.

**Badger** I've got an idea ...

*As they exit, the lights fade to blackout*

## Scene 2

*A spot comes on DR on Watson, who is reading from his journal*

**Watson** Jeremiah Grogan was an Irishman from Cork, a clever criminal who was well known to the police but had so far eluded capture. He came to our notice when a burglary was reported at the Kensington mansion of the Duke of Sussex, during which one of the household servants was most foully murdered. Among the items stolen was a priceless tiara belonging to the Duchess. A police search of the house and grounds revealed no clues, and it was at this point that Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard summoned my colleague Sherlock Holmes. A further search revealed a footprint in a pool of creosote. Holmes with typical resourcefulness enlisted the aid of a Mr Sherman, whose bloodhound Toby took the scent and led us eventually to a small landing-stage at Millbank. Nearby was the house of a boatman called Mordecai Smith, who was absent. But his wife informed us that her husband had sailed downriver only twenty four hours previously in the company of a tall bearded Irishman called Brogan or Grogan, and who walked with a limp. She was also able to give us a full description of the *Aurora*. Holmes reckoned the villain probably intended to lie low for a day or two whilst the heat was on. So time was short, and a speedy search of the riverbank urgent.

*The spot fades*

### **The Baker Street Kids**

*The Case of the Riverbank Chase* is an exciting adventure based on Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four*, featuring a gang of boys (and girls) known as *The Baker Street Irregulars*, who assist the great detective Sherlock Holmes in tracking down a notorious criminal called Jeremiah Grogan. The climax is a thrilling chase along the banks of the River Thames.

The play which is for a mixed cast of 11-14 year-olds and has fifteen parts, is ideal for schools. It is technically demanding, but full of comic and suspenseful moments, and guaranteed to thrill and amuse.

Running time 45-50 minutes.

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