Don't Burn Your Abridgements: more 60 word stories

by SCFrankles

Summary

60-word stories inspired by the 60 Sherlock Holmes stories in the ACD canon.

Written for Sherlock60 on LJ.

Notes

This is my second collection of 60 word stories, and this time the ficlets will appear in the order the canon stories were published.
A Study in Scarlet: The Landlady & By Any Other Name

The Landlady

*During the first week or so we had no callers...* In the early days of Holmes and Watson’s tenancy, a landlady writes to reassure her aged mother.

Dear Mother,

Please disregard my previous letter and don’t worry. The unholy screaming turned out to be just the tall one playing his violin.

My new tenants have proved to be proper gentlemen. One is a doctor! And the other is so quiet and regular in his habits.

Honestly, I believe they are going to be no trouble at all.

By Any Other Name

“I know well that I have it in me to make my name famous.” “Sherlock Holmes” is an unusual name, is it not?

“I know I have it in me to make my name famous,” said Holmes.

“Indeed!” declared his new flatmate. “Soon everyone will know the name ‘Sherwood Holmes’!”

Holmes frowned. “It’s ‘Sherlock’.”

“My apologies,” said Watson. “Everyone will know the name ‘Sherlogg Holmes’!”

“That’s still…”

“‘Sherlott’?”

“No.” Holmes sighed. “Perhaps I don’t have it in me to make my name famous.”
The Sign of Four: Bored, Plot, Love Triangle & Foreigners

Bored

...battle of Maiwand. There I was struck on the shoulder by a Jezail bullet... STUD (Battle took place July 1880.)

On the evening of our arrival we were sitting in the Colonel's gun-room after dinner... REIG (Story takes place Apr. 1887.)

...sat nursing my wounded leg. I had had a Jezail bullet through it some time before... SIGN (Story takes place Sept. 1888.)

“John, I thought you were wounded in the shoulder,” said Mary.

“I was, dearest,” I agreed.

“But you said your leg injury was caused by a bullet from a Jezail…”

“It didn’t happen in Afghanistan, though. Holmes was examining part of Colonel Hayter’s collection and… accidentally shot me.” I winced. “Must say, it’s not often I’m the one who’s bore-d.”

Plot

Boy meets girl.
Boy loses girl because of treasure.
Boy loses treasure.
Boy finds girl again.

Other boy loses fellow lodger.
Other boy finds cocaine.
Other boy loses cocaine.
Other boy asks boy if he has perhaps seen it but boy insists he has not.
Other boy gives boy searching look.

Luckily at this point, other boy finds new case.

Love Triangle

“...produces much the same effect as if you worked a love-story or an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid.” I seem to have gone off at a tangent…
Base-Line and Caro-Line’s paths crossed, and she angled herself towards him.

“Introduce me?” She nodded over at the line leaning towards her.

Base-Line scowled. They didn’t need to be introduced. Those two lines were eventually going to meet.

Perhaps, he thought, he’d be able to find romance if he weren’t so straight. After all, he did appear to be bisectual.

Foreigners

“They are a fierce, morose, and intractable people, though capable of forming most devoted friendships when their confidence has once been gained.” (Chap. 8)

England:

Climate

Damp with occasional sunshine (first Monday in August).

Culture

Convivial get-togethers (charmingly known as “getting steaming drunk”), and the occasional friendly punch-up (known as “football”).

People

Approach with caution and cups of tea.

Useful phrases:

This is wonderful!

In the local dialect: *D’you know, that’s not bad.*

I’ll miss you passionately! Unbearably!
In the local dialect: *Bye, then.*
The Accusative Case

‘This account of you we have from all quarters received.’ It is the German who is so uncourteous to his verbs.

The Bohemian lifestyle had seemed so attractive. They were going to be employed by a king! But it had only led to their formal separation.

“I thought everything would be Perfect,” said Have, tensely. “It’s your fault—we were always so close before.”

Received sighed. And thought longingly of the Simple Past, when it had been all on its own.

Substitution

“When a woman thinks that her house is on fire, her instinct is at once to rush to the thing which she values most. … In the case of the Darlington Substitution Scandal it was of use to me... A married woman grabs at her baby—an unmarried one reaches for her jewel box.” Mothers aren’t always married.

“He’s not my baby!” sobbed Mrs. Darlington.

Her husband glanced at Holmes. “She’s not well…” But a cry interrupted him.

“FIRE!”

And a maid rushed in and desperately snatched up the boy.

Holmes smiled sadly. “When danger threatens, a mother thinks only of her child. Mr. Darlington, I believe you will find your other son safe at the local convent.”
ADD - AUB

Address
For example: 221B, Baker Street.

Adventure
Something that happens when you put a consulting detective and an army doctor together.

Amusement
Something that happens when you put a consulting detective, an army doctor and Jabez Wilson together.

Arrests
See: Happy Ending.

Auburn
Ginger. Other shades include: straw, lemon, orange, brick, Irish-setter, liver, clay and flame. See: the Red-headed League.

Distinctive Features

"It is your commonplace, featureless crimes which are really puzzling, just as a commonplace face is the most difficult to identify."

“Good heavens, sir,” said Holmes. “You seem so familiar and yet… Your features are so commonplace. Undistinguished. A thought though! Perhaps if you had a decorative fringe betwixt nose and upper lip, it might…”

“Yes! Fine!” said Watson. “I simply felt like a change! But as it apparently troubles you so much, I shall regrow the damn moustache!”
"As to the letters," he continued, glancing over them, "they are very commonplace. Absolutely no clue in them to Mr. Angel, save that he quotes Balzac once."

“Women,” said Watson.

“Hmm…?” Holmes put down his book.

“Sometimes I do wonder…” Watson blushed. “…how well you… know women.” He looked away. “Never mind! None of my business!”

Holmes frowned. “Watson, I am not as innocent as you think. I am intimately acquainted with the female body." He found his page again. “I’ve dissected at least three of them.”

(No man should marry until he has studied anatomy and dissected at least one woman. Honore de Balzac)

"This is the Dundas separation case, and, as it happens, I was engaged in clearing up some small points in connection with it."

“What were those small points?”

“Complaints of vampire bats,” said Holmes.

He smiled at my expression. “In frustration at her husband’s behaviour, Mrs. Dundas had taken to throwing his false teeth at male passers-by every night.”

I frowned. “Her husband’s cruelty was indefensible but that just isn’t cricket.”

“Perhaps not,” said Holmes. “But apparently she had a lovely bowling action.”
The Boscombe Valley Mystery: The Cloth Vanishes

The Cloth Vanishes

“...*the incident of the vanishing cloth.*”

Holmes’ new client owned a gentlemen’s outfitters.

“Our stocktaking showed that twenty rolls of fabric are missing,” he said. “You must find the thief!”

Holmes investigated and reported back. “I have considered the evidence…” He smirked. “You’ve been placing your orders for the rolls incorrectly.”

“Damn!” said the proprietor.

Holmes tutted. “Such language. And from a man of the cloth.”
Put in Order

“...the rest he can put away in the lumber-room of his library, where he can get it if he wants it.”
...for a few days I was a dweller once more in my old quarters at Baker Street.

In my old room books covered every surface.

“Holmes,” I said, “I demand you rearrange your library!”

He agreed, and returned later smiling. “I think you will fit in nicely now.”

I am still uncertain whether it was accidental—that WATSON, JH spent his stay sleeping between WATERFOWL OF BRITAIN on one side, and WATTEAU: A Life on the other.

Taking Tea

*My wife was on a visit to her mother's... “...it is more likely to be some crony of the landlady's.”*

“Your husband’s latest story is splendid,” said Mrs. Hudson.

“Yes, apart from the printers’ errors...” Mrs. Watson sipped her tea. “‘1887’, and myself at my ‘mother’s’. And poor Mama dead for twenty years! I was visiting my mother country—Scotland. Where I was born and went to school.”

She sighed.

“They’ll start to think John had more than one wife...”
Send Your Wife a Note

“And you are sure that this is your husband’s hand?” “One of his hands.”

“...the impression of a woman may be more valuable than the conclusion of an analytical reasoner.”

Monograph on JH Watson’s Handwriting

by Mary Watson

First Specimen: Sloping

Interpretation: Excited about forthcoming adventure.

Second Specimen: Hurried scrawl

Interpretation: After leisurely breakfast at Baker Street, abruptly remembers he has a wife who might be worried about him.

Third Specimen: Carefully formed

Interpretation: Apparently hoping the flowers and card will ensure he’s not sleeping in the spare room tonight.

Details

“Holmes: a deduction. The new partner at my publisher’s contacted you to query a detail, didn’t he?”

Holmes was surprised. “Yes. You and Mrs. Watson were away.”

“Another deduction,” Watson continued. “You’ve been removing ‘unimportant’ facts from your brain-attic.”

“Correct again!” said Holmes. “How did you work it out?”

“Because…” Watson brandished the Strand magazine. “…my ruddy name is John!”
A Quiet Christmas

Mary considered her list of Christmas presents. “Gloves for Mrs. Forrester, cigars for Anstruther… What about Mr. Holmes?”

“Oh, I’m taking Holmes out one evening to hear a concert,” said Watson.

“So that’s everyone…” Mary frowned. “No, wait! There’s Mrs. Hudson! What will her present be?”

Watson raised an eyebrow. “I’m taking Holmes out one evening to hear a concert.”
Mrs. Hudson noticed the poker was slightly twisted and Mr. Holmes explained about the late Dr. Roylott.

“But you shouldn’t have straightened it out!” she scolded. “Showing off to Dr. Watson—you might have injured yourself!”

He blandly denied showing off to anyone but she saw the smile.

Just like the poker, Mr. Holmes’ poker face had a definite curve.

The die is cast: the villain goes up a ladder.

Holmes follows but finds a snake at the top and slides back to where he started from.

It’s Watson’s turn. He advances, ascends the second ladder and catches up with the murderous zookeeper.

“Holmes afraid of snakes, is he?” sneers the fugitive.

Watson throws a punch to win the game!
The Engineer's Thumb: Resuscitation & Oo, Missus

**Resuscitation**

“Between your brandy and your bandage, I feel a new man…” Brandy! The medicine for all ills!

Holmes poured out the brandy and carefully dosed the patient.

“Yes!” beamed Watson. “A healthier colour already!”

Skilfully wielding the knife, he excised the merest sliver, which he passed to Holmes.

Who popped it into his mouth and chewed thoughtfully.

“Mm,” said Holmes eventually, “much better. The new cook is tolerable, but she simply cannot make a decent simnel cake.”

**Oo, Missus**

*I rushed upstairs, explained the matter shortly to my wife, and in five minutes was inside a hansom, driving with my new acquaintance to Baker Street. Some innuendo may have crept into my story. Possibly.*

Watson rushed in.

“Dearest, the guard picked a young man up at the station! Apparently the boy had a *very* busy night. This ended with him having to sort himself out but then he needed further attention from me. Now he feels like a new man—so I’m taking him to Holmes!”

Watson dashed away again.

“Um..?” said Mrs. Watson.
Spring Clean

"By the same brilliant reasoning, every man's body is to be found in the neighbourhood of his wardrobe...."

“Strange case!” laughed Holmes. “The murder victim was incredibly untidy. But after strangling him, the killer put his room in complete order, including folding the body and stowing it in the wardrobe!”

“And the murderer was...” prompted Watson.

“The landlady?” said Mrs. Hudson.

“Yes!” smiled Holmes. “How did you know?”

Mrs. Hudson looked at him. “It seemed the logical answer...”

Flora and Fauna

So Robert had found another heiress to marry. Flora tucked the newspaper away.

Though her fiancé wouldn’t be jealous. It was strange—she felt nothing for Lord St. Simon now. Instead she had Jem, who had asked if she would do him the honour of becoming his wife.

After all this time, she had finally managed to find a gentleman.
The Beryl Coronet: Be Mine

Be Mine

*It was a bright, crisp February morning...* Holmes and Watson’s fame is growing...

The morning of the 14th brought more post than usual for Holmes.

“Five Valentines!” he declared, resolutely pretending not to be pleased.

He tossed them aside.

“Sentimental nonsense, of course. Watson, did you get anything in..?”

Holmes’ voice trailed away as he took in the huge pile of cards next to Watson’s plate.

Watson smiled weakly. “Oh, just… bills… mostly.”
The Copper Beeches: The Merry, Merry Pipes of Holmes

The Merry, Merry Pipes of Holmes

...the long cherry-wood pipe which was wont to replace his clay when he was in a disputatious rather than a meditative mood…

Instructions for Mrs. Hudson

**Smoking the clay pipe:** he is thinking. Disturb as little as possible.

**Smoking the cherry-wood:** in disputatious mood. Do *not* make eye contact. Do *not* enter into arguments about the Semitic language of the ancient Chaldeans.

**Smoking the meerschaum:** evacuate entire building *immediately*. Telegraph me thereafter.

Good luck. Stay calm. I will be back on Tuesday.
...Sherlock Holmes... dipped rapidly into the bundle of fresh papers... We had left Reading far behind us before he thrust the last one of them under the seat, and offered me his cigar-case.

“Look!” said the first cleaner, pulling out newspapers from under the carriage seat.

“And there’s ash and cigar stubs everywhere,” said the second.

Mrs. Fields sighed. “Passengers! Bet you wish you were in London instead, Mrs. Turner—helping your sister Mrs. Hudson.”

“Gracious, no,” her workmate answered. “Apparently she hasn’t managed to find Mr. Holmes’ sitting room floor since 1882.”

...so close together that a carpet could have covered them... ...you know that men do not carry other people’s bills about in their pockets. We have most of us quite enough to do to settle our own.

“How could you spend all that money?” whispered Watson. “And with the rent due!”

“I needed a disguise,” muttered Holmes.

“But a dress of pure silk?!”

Holmes scowled. “You bought that field-glass!” He froze. “Hush! She’s coming..!”

“Heavens,” said Mrs. Hudson. “They’re out again. Still, I can get some cleaning done. Start by giving this lumpy rug a good beating...”
And That's How Watson Got His Whiskers

“The features are given to man as the means by which he shall express his emotions, and yours are faithful servants.”

“So,” said the agency’s Head. “You’re Dr. Watson’s servants?”

“It’s exhausting!” said Left-Eyebrow.

“We’re forever shooting up his forehead in surprise,” Right-Eyebrow explained.

The Head nodded. “I’ll find you both a new position.”

“My eyebrows!” cried Watson. “They’ve fallen out in the night!”

“Heavens, whatever—”

Holmes paused and stared.

“Watson. Did you have that moustache when you went to bed..?”
Forever Amber

“A nice old brier with a good long stem of what the tobacconists call amber. I wonder how many real amber mouthpieces there are in London? Some people think that a fly in it is a sign.”

London Tobacconist’s, 1885

“There’s a huge fly in this amber!” declared Miss Brown, directing Mr. Montague’s attention to the stem. “Just think: it lived all those years ago…”

Millions of years earlier

“Do you ever wonder about immortality?” asked Little Fly. “Being remembered after you’re gone?”

“That’d be nice,” said Big Fly. “But I think it’s just a pipe dream.”

Muscular Effort

_Sherlock Holmes was a man who seldom took exercise for exercise's sake…_

“Do come for a walk, Holmes!” said Watson.

“I have no need of exercise,” sighed Holmes from the settee. “I’m naturally athletic.”

As soon as Watson was gone, Holmes stood up and whipped out the dumbbells. “One, two, thr —”

“Holmes, I forgot…”

“Oh!” Holmes dropped the weights.

Watson grinned. “Naturally athletic, eh? Those may be dumbbells but they speak volumes.”
"And the practice?" "I do my neighbour's when he goes. He is always ready to work off the debt."

“Where do you think Anstruther goes?” mused Mary. “When you look after his practice?”

“Hmm...?” Watson stared at his patient’s notes and sighed. No more adventures until Mrs. Thorpe had recovered.

***

“The doctor’s here at last, Mr. Holmes!”

“Do send him up, Mrs. Hudson!”

Holmes beamed as the new arrival hurried in.

“Good man, Anstruther. Thank you for standing in!”
Trevor was the only man I knew, and that only through the accident of his bull terrier freezing on to my ankle one morning as I went down to chapel.

Victor Trevor was visiting London. “Remember how we met..?”

Holmes winced. “Vividly.” He indicated the photograph Trevor was holding. “Delighted to see you’ve gained many friends since.”


“Well,” said Holmes. “That’s... excellent.”
The Musgrave Ritual: A Moving Story

A Moving Story

When I first came up to London I had rooms in Montague Street..."

“So why did you leave Montague Street?” enquired Watson.

Holmes looked uncomfortable. “Well, do you recall your reference to criminal relics turning up in the butter dish and even less desirable places?”

“Ah.” Watson nodded. “Your landlady found a relic in the butter.”

“In a way…” said Holmes carefully. “I believe the surgeon eventually located the article in her duodenum.”
Mrs. Hudson, the landlady of Sherlock Holmes, was a long-suffering woman. ...her remarkable lodger... [was] ...the very worst tenant in London. (DYIN)

Back at Baker Street, Holmes recreated the scene.

“...and suddenly his hands were around my throat, strangling me! I thought my last moment had definitely come..!”

Holmes stared off into the distance and Watson took the opportunity to lean over to their landlady.

“Mrs. Hudson..?”

“Yes, sir?”

Watson moved closer. “Perhaps,” he whispered, “best not to smile quite so broadly?”
Beastly

...the landlady seemed to be in considerable trepidation, for she had never seen an animal like it.

“It’s the most curious creature...” mused the landlady.

“Yes?” said her friend, wide-eyed.

The landlady nodded. “Sometimes it’s curled up, thinking about its prey. Sometimes it’s dashing around the room. And once I caught it climbing the curtain!”

“What is this creature?” the friend whispered.

“It has many names but I call it…”

The landlady’s voice dropped.

“...a consulting detective!”
Sea Monsters

...that other later one connected with the loss of the ‘Gloria Scott’, may serve as examples of this Scylla and Charybdis… they were among the passengers of the ill-fated steamer ‘Norah Creina’, which was lost some years ago with all hands...

“Great news!” called Charybdis. “The Fates have cast us in another Holmes case!”

“Oh,” said Scylla.

Charybdis frowned. “Thought you’d be pleased.”

“Well...” said Scylla. “Isn’t it getting a bit samey? The villains get away by ship... We exact retribution... Don’t you feel typecast?”

“Yeah. But think of all those ‘resting’ supernatural entities,” said Charybdis. “Let’s not... rock the boat.”
Watson was trying to ask Holmes a question.

(“Why..?”)

But Holmes was thinking.

(“Can I ask..?”)

And then experimenting.

Just before supper, Watson made one last attempt.

“Holmes!”

“Watson!” Holmes jumped. “Didn’t hear you arrive home.”

Watson sighed. “I wanted to ask: why haven’t you joined the Diogenes Club?”

Holmes frowned. “But I like socialising with you in the evenings.”
“Miss Harrison,” said Holmes, speaking with the utmost intensity of manner, “you must stay where you are all day. Let nothing prevent you from staying where you are all day. It is of the utmost importance.”

Miss Harrison was regretting all the cups of tea.

She attempted to distract herself. “Row, row, row your boat, gently down the— No! Er, Doctor Foster went to Gloucester in a— Oh, dear!”

She whimpered piteously.

The maid encountered her in the corridor later. “Everything all right, madam..?”

“Yes!”

Miss Harrison galloped away.

Crikey, thought the maid. She’s gone potty.
The Final Problem: Names & A Heavy Heart

Names

Baring-Gould tells us that Holmes’ full name was ‘William Sherlock Scott Holmes’. But he got his information a little muddled…

They stared at the memorial plaque.

“I didn’t know your brother had more than one Christian name,” said Watson.

Mycroft nodded. “Our father was an admirer of William Sherlock; our mother an admirer of Sir Walter Scott.”

“How lovely,” said Watson, wincing internally.

‘IVANHOE HOLMES’ read the inscription.

No wonder the poor fellow had preferred to be known as Sherlock.

A Heavy Heart

Not a humorous one this time...

The telegram reached me from Meiringen and I immediately set out for Switzerland.

Upon my arrival my husband declared, “I had only meant to let you know what had happened, Mary. I did not mean you to come.”

However, the way he tightly gripped my hands told another story.

John always heeded Mr. Holmes’ call. I will always heed John’s.
The Hound of the Baskervilles: Anonymous & Holmes and the Typewriter

Anonymous

"...some one cut out this message with a scissors—"

“But who sent it?” Watson stared at the anonymous missive.

“Mrs. Hudson,” said Holmes.

“Really?”

“Well, there are kipper stains, and the unmistakable scent of carbolic. The words used have been cut from our local newspaper...”

Holmes paused.

“And of course there’s the fact the message reads: Stop setting fire to the curtains or I’ll have your guts for garters.”

Holmes and the Typewriter

The Mystery of the Missing ‘d’

Observation

“No, it hasn’t ‘disappeared again’, Holmes. It’s there! By the ‘s’! Oh, for... There, you wretched man!”

Deduction

“You’re never going to get the hang of typewriting, are you?”

Solution

“It’s gone back to the shop. If you need any more typewriting doing, Miss Henderson of Sandelow Street will be delighted to oblige.”
The Empty House: Beauty & Empty Houses

Beauty

...look up at our old rooms—the starting-point of so many of your little fairy-tales... (NB There are two versions of this sentence—the other has “our little adventures…”)

Watson discovered Holmes disguised as a rose, but the Beast caught him.

“Please,” said Watson. “His absence has left a void in my life.”

The Beast grinned. “Then in exchange, I want the first thing you see when you return home.”

Watson woke with a start to find Mary smiling down at him sadly.

“Just a nightmare, John,” she whispered.

Empty Houses

The Honourable Ronald Adair was the second son of the Earl of Maynooth, at that time governor of one of the Australian colonies. Adair’s mother had returned from Australia to undergo the operation for cataract, and she, her son Ronald, and her daughter Hilda were living together at 427, Park Lane.

“Thank you again, Mr. Holmes.” The Countess turned away.

Holmes bowed and we left, Holmes raising a quizzical eyebrow at me. He was puzzled by the suppressed anger that had accompanied the gratitude but I understood, of course. Dear God, I even sympathised with Moran a little!

All three of us had lost someone who would not be miraculously returning.
Holmes and Mrs. Hudson both possessed impressive singing voices, and one evening I managed to persuade them to demonstrate their talents before Lestrade.

Our guest sat open-mouthed, as the two voices rang out together—one deep and one high.

“Astonishing, aren’t they?” I whispered.

“Yes…” Lestrade hesitated. “Though I must admit I’d been expecting Mrs. Hudson to be the soprano.”

(I heard a ring at the bell, followed by the high, somewhat strident tones of my old companion’s voice. (STOC))
The Dancing Men: Fogs of Baker Street

Fogs of Baker Street

...whose clear eyes and florid cheeks told of a life led far from the fogs of Baker Street.

Noxious Experiments

“You’re very quiet, Watson.”
“I’m giving you a hard look, Holmes.”
“But I can’t see it...”
“My point exactly.”

Tobacco

“You know it helps me to think, Watson.”
“It’s giving me a few ideas too.”

Smouldering Curtains

“A black eye, Holmes?”
“Mm. The fog was so thick, I couldn’t see Mrs. Hudson’s hand in front of my face.”
The strong, masterful personality of Holmes dominated the tragic scene, and all were equally puppets in his hands.

“Great heavens!” Mrs. Hudson halted in the doorway of the sitting room.

Holmes scowled. “Pray do not concern yourself. We are simply re-enacting Miss Smith’s abduction, so the Doctor can fix the details in his mind before he writes.”

“But using Punch and Judy puppets?” said Mrs. Hudson.

“Well,” said Watson. “It just seemed… that’s the way to do it.”
The Priory School: Winging It & Academia

Winging It

*There is an inn here, the Red Bull... The people at the inn were alert all night...*

They stayed one more night in Mackleton.

“Holmes!” cried Watson the next morning. “I’ve solved the Ferrers Documents case...!”

And Holmes listened in astonishment as the doctor explained. “Watson! That’s it!”

Watson beamed. “It’s all thanks to our celebration at the inn. I don’t know what’s in those Red Bull drinks but I didn’t close my eyes once last night!”

Academia

*His card, which seemed too small to carry the weight of his academic distinctions...*

The witness was an Oxford don, who eyed Holmes’ card suspiciously.

“I wonder you do not list your academic qualifications,” he said.

“To be truthful,” Holmes smiled, “I did not complete my official studies.”

The professor frowned. “I spent eight years at various colleges.”

Holmes nodded gravely. “It is nothing to be ashamed of. Some people do need extra assistance.”
Coincidences

“I was convinced that the initials ‘P.C.’ upon the pouch were a coincidence…”


Holmes glanced up. “No. Someone left it here.”

“Ah, of course. ‘Stanley Hopkins’,” smiled Watson.

Holmes sighed. “As I’ve said: one should always look for a possible alternative.”

“You mean…”

Holmes nodded. “Mrs. ‘Sybilla’ Hudson has made her point. I’ll tidy the sitting room.”
Afterwards

...he is as cunning as the Evil One…

After Milverton’s death, the serpent took up residence with her.

Every day it whispered its blackmail. “If you go out, I’ll give you away. Everyone will know what you’ve done.”

So she stayed alone and isolated, ignoring her friends’ pleas.

But she had rid the world of a poisonous creature. This time she was prepared to pay the serpent’s price.
The Six Napoleons: A Cover-Up

A Cover-Up

...the shop of Morse Hudson, who has a place for the sale of pictures and statues...

The tall customer seemed familiar somehow.

“I need a large print,” he said. “To cover an area of… charred wallpaper.”

Morse Hudson considered. “The Death of Chatterton, perhaps?”

“Perfect. Send it to ” The gentleman paused abruptly. “Tell me—you’re not related to a Mrs. Hudson? Of Baker Street..?”

“Well, no,” frowned Morse Hudson.

“Thank God for that,” muttered the gentleman.

[A/N: The model used for The Death of Chatterton was a young George Meredith, and it is of course canon that Holmes was an admirer of his (see BOSC).]
The Three Students: Fun and Games

Fun and Games

“...the landlady babbled of green peas at seven-thirty.” “Quite a little parlour game…”

"Hot boiled beans and butter; walk in and find your supper!” chanted everyone.

Holmes re-entered the room and began a determined search.

“Cold!” called Hopkins.

“Cold!” called Mrs. Hudson.

“Even colder!” laughed Watson.

Lestrade furrowed his brow. “When do we tell him we didn’t hide the thimble?” he whispered.

“Oh, he’s the genius,” grinned Watson. “Let him work it out.”
...it is nothing more exciting than an Abbey’s accounts dating from the second half of the fifteenth century. A 15th century genderswap AU.


Sister Johanna frowned. “I had to wallop that thief, Abbess! He pulled a knife!”

“Yes. I—”

“And someone had to investigate those murders!” protested Sister Sherlock.

“Yes! You’re doing God’s work! It’s just…” The Abbess sighed. “Perhaps don’t be so... thorough during confession. Poor Father Lestrade looks positively ashen.”
In A Flap

We were fairly accustomed to receive weird telegrams at Baker Street… I went round and saw that all the fellows had gone to roost…

“Holmes…” said Watson, cautiously. “There’s a carrier pigeon. Tapping at the window.”

“Excellent!”

Holmes beamed.

“It’s a communication from Hopkins!”

He brought the bird inside and removed the message.

“Shocking new evidence, Mr. Holmes. True killer is—”

Holmes frowned and turned over the paper. “Oh! Second pigeon to follow.”

Watson sighed. “I do wish you’d learn to embrace the telephone.”
It was on a bitterly cold and frosty morning during the winter of ’97 that I was awakened by a tugging at my shoulder. It was Holmes.
Well, who else would it be? (Something for Hallowe’en.)

The tugging at my arm roused me and I opened my eyes to see a candle disappearing down the landing.

“What is it, Holmes? A case?”

Half asleep I made my way downstairs, muttering about some of us needing our rest.

It was only when I entered the dark and empty sitting room, I remembered.

Holmes had gone to France.
Mail

It has been written hurriedly... ...he has acted in an indiscreet and hot-headed manner. Always pause and think before sending...

Subject: Idiot Friends

Holmes,

next time you travel to Swansea, give me the drawer key first so I can retrieve my chequebook.

The laundry is refusing to relinquish my trousers.

Watson thrust the note at Billy.

“Send!”

Billy headed for the post office.

Watson sighed. Then scowled as he spotted the diagram of himself throttling Holmes.

“Damn. Forgot the attachment.”

[A/N: This 60 was partly inspired by rachelindeed’s comments on a DANC discussion at Sherlock60.]
A Love Interest

“...a common female name in Spain.” “I may add that Miss Burnet's age and character make it certain that my first idea that there might be a love interest in our story is out of the question.” Signora Durando is “forty or thereabouts.”

Sister Cecilia gently rocked the baby. “Couldn’t your husband’s family..?”

“I am a widow of some years.” The lady swallowed. “Her father was a good man but he’s dead too.”

She cast one last, longing look at the child.

“I’ve chosen her name but it might be kinder to change it.”

The lady stood to go.

“It’s Dolores. For sorrow.”
Story Time

“It is as if you met a tram-car coming down a country lane. Mycroft has his rails and he runs on them.”

“...and after scolding the naughty thief, Sherlock the Submarine and John the Tank Engine returned the secret plans to Mycroft the Tram-car. And then they all lived happily ever after!”

Little Godfrey narrowed his eyes at Nanny. From what the other chaps had been saying at school, he strongly suspected she was censoring the Sherlock Holmes stories in some way.
The Devil's Foot: Visions

Visions

“Yet there they sat, driven clean mad with terror, and Brenda lying dead of fright…” ...a thick, musky odour, subtle and nauseous. At the very first whiff of it my brain and my imagination were beyond all control.

The monster loomed over the ship.

The Nobleman and the Knight had already succumbed to terror. The Princess brandished her sword but waves rose and crashed down onto her.

As the water brought death though, she finally comprehended the name of the sorcerer and she used her own magic.

“Mortimer,” whispered the Princess.

And far away, the Lion heard her.

A/N: Brenda: probably not from Brendan, which means “prince”. But possibly from the Old Norse name Brandr, which means ”sword”. Owen: probably a Welsh form of Eugene, which means “well born”. George: the patron saint of England. A Roman soldier, who in legend fought a dragon. Leon: from the Greek, meaning “lion”. Mortimer: from the Old French, “dead sea”.
The Red Circle: Absent & By Gum

Absent

“Why, bless you, Mrs. Warren, if I were your lodger...”

“...you often would not see me for weeks on end.’” Mrs. Turner put down the Strand. “I suppose he was always thinking. Or away on adventures!”

“Well…”

(Mr. Holmes! The rent is due!

Regarding your noxious experiments, I... Where’s he gone?

There are twenty-seven urchins demanding sandwiches! Mr. Holmes—where the hell are you?)

“Something like that,” said Mrs. Hudson.

By Gum

...Sherlock Holmes... turned back to the great scrapbook in which he was arranging and indexing some of his recent material... The two forces made him lay down his gum-brush...

Holmes finished pasting material into his scrapbook, and then steepled his hands underneath his chin in a familiar gesture. I knew better than to disturb my friend when he was thinking and so I turned my attention to my newspaper.

An hour later, Holmes sighed.

“You’ve solved the problem?” I asked.

“No,” said Holmes. “My hands are still stuck together.”
The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax: Art & Devilry

Art

"I don't admit that a fresh illustration is an explanation..."

“He’s had another go!” Watson handed over the sheet of paper. “Sorry, Mrs. Hudson. Ever since Holmes developed laryngitis, he’s become wedded to the idea that drawing his wishes is easier than writing them.”

Mrs. Hudson tilted the sketch. “So. For dinner he wants... is that a harpsichord?”

Watson shrugged. “The art in Mr. Holmes’ blood takes very strange forms.”

Devilry

My night was haunted by the thought that somewhere a clue, a strange sentence, a curious observation, had come under my notice and had been too easily dismissed. It is Hallowe’en at Baker Street…

“But, Holmes…”

“Do hold it still!”

Holmes lit the lantern and then put on his devil mask. “There. Now we can go and frighten those wretched children who have been upsetting Mrs. Hudson.”

“But, Holmes!”

Watson held up the glowing turnip lantern. “This truly isn’t what I envisioned when you asked if I would be your ‘conductor of light’ tonight!”
The Dying Detective: A Long-Suffering Woman

A Long-Suffering Woman

It was with a sinking heart that I reëntered Holmes’s bedroom... A litter of pipes, tobacco-pouches, syringes, penknives, revolver-cartridges, and other debris was scattered over it. More than one kind of litter, of course…

KEEP OUT: LITTER INSIDE! read the sign.

Mrs. Hudson sighed and entered.

“Oh!”

Holmes smiled weakly. “The puppies are going to new homes shortly.”

“Good!” Mrs. Hudson paused. “Though… is that one still available?”

“How’s he settling in?” asked Mrs. Turner.

“Investigating everything! Destroying my furnishings.” Mrs. Hudson rubbed the puppy’s ears. “Oh, Sherlock. You’re a bad boy, aren’t you?”
Tartness

“Being the seventh of January…” “Really, Holmes,” said I severely, “you are a little trying at times.” Holmes is in a bit of a mood at the start of the story. Did something perhaps happen the day before on the sixth..?

“It’s turned out beautifully, Doctor!”

Mrs. Hudson brought in the tart proudly, and looked around the room.

“Oh! Mr. Holmes not with you..?”

“Stayed on after the service.” Watson sighed. “He insisted he’d found a coded message behind the pulpit.”

“Behind the— Aren’t those the hymn numbers?”

Watson nodded glumly. “Give him an hour. I’m sure he’ll have an epiphany.”

A/N: Apparently in Victorian times the Epiphany Tart was popular: a jam tart made with up to 13 different jams. The shape of a six pointed star was formed inside the case with more pastry and then all the sections were filled in to make a stained glass window effect.

Christmas Morning

“You need not be ashamed to be frightened of him. It is Teddy Baldwin.” “Just the same old Teddy Marvin, at your service.” Holmes wouldn’t have had a teddy as a child as they weren’t invented until 1902. But he could still have had some kind of toy bears…

Mama smiled. “What did Father Christmas bring?”

Sherlock held up two bears.

“This one’s a policeman!”

“Lovely!” said Mama.

“And this one’s a murderer!”

“I see...” said Mama.

“I’m helping to investigate.” Sherlock stared into his stocking. “I need to question the witnesses now...”
“Is he enjoying his presents?” asked Papa.

Mama nodded. “I’ve just left him cross-examining his satsuma.”

**Derailed**

“I have no more notion than you how long it is to last,” Holmes answered with some asperity. "If criminals would always schedule their movements like railway trains, it would certainly be more convenient for all of us.”

Travelling back from Birlstone, our first train was late by an hour and the second by two. We finally arrived back in London past midnight, Holmes somewhat annoyed.

In an attempt to lighten the situation, I said: “You know, Holmes—criminals do schedule their movements like railway trains!”

And that is why I am spending the night at my club.

**Masks**

[McGinty] was popular; for he had a rough, jovial disposition which formed a mask, covering a great deal which lay behind it.

The murderer proved to be a respectable, charming, handsome man.

“Never judge a man by his personal qualities,” said Holmes.

I thought back to my friend’s detachment as he examined the girl’s body. “No,” I agreed.

He had searched for the killer after the police declared it hopeless. Holmes sometimes wears a cold mask. But it is just a mask.
His Last Bow: She Gets My Vote & Handling the Situation

She Gets My Vote

“...window-breaking Furies...” My story is set in 1903.

“I’m leaving for my Women’s Suffrage meeting now, Mr. Holmes.”

“Oh, Mrs. Hudson…”

Holmes looked over and smiled kindly.

“Naturally I respect you. But electing governments needs logic! Reason!”

And bringing up his gun, he carried on shooting at the sitting room wall.

Mrs. Hudson sighed and put on her hat.

“I’ll be back in time to serve supper, sir.”

Handling the Situation

Von Bork still struggling behind them, the friends climbed into the little Ford. Watson adjusted the controls and then got out again.

“Have you forgotten something?” asked Holmes, puzzled.

Watson smiled. “How did you contrive to pass yourself off as a motor expert?” He waved the starting handle. “As we’re now departing, it’s time for me to wind things up.”
Holmes and Watson were attending the unveiling of their likenesses at Madame Tussaud’s. On a broiling summer’s day.

“It’s like a furnace,” whispered Watson.

Holmes sighed. “Indeed.”

The covering was whipped away and there was a shocked intake of breath from the audience.

“Oh, dear,” said Watson, staring at the waxworks. “Holmes, I appear to have melted into your arms.”

“Gramophones are splendid. But I prefer my old wax cylinder player!”

Holmes grabbed the head from his wax replica, inserted it into the machine and put the needle in place.

Astonishingly, a lovely melody began to play.

Watson wrinkled his brow. “What is that? Is it something famous?”

“Oh, no,” said Holmes. “It’s just something out of my own head.”
The Problem of Thor Bridge: The Vaults & A Lesson

The Vaults

“I am getting into your involved habit, Watson, of telling a story backward.” A retired Holmes is visiting Watson in London.

“Mr. Holmes not with you?” asked my landlady. “No,” I smiled. “But I’ve left him somewhere safe.”

-----

“Watson? Watson? Hulloo? The door seems to be locked…”

-----

“Ah, the Phillimore disappearance case… This was an excellent idea of yours, Watson—paying a visit to Cox and Co.!”

-----

“Of course I’m enjoying discussing apiculture with you, Holmes. The hours are flying by.”

A Lesson

“...ruin a defenceless girl who was under your roof.” This is such a passionate response from Holmes. Could there be a personal aspect to it?

“Mycroft just remembers her. She left soon after I was born.”

I nodded sympathetically—stunned, but moved that the Holmeses took in a stranger’s child and I froze.

The brothers had the same ‘art in the blood’.

Holmes waved carelessly. “It’s fortunate my father kept me. Life as the son of an unmarried governess… Well.”

“Holmes…”

“All in the past.”

(A/N: To be honest, even I don’t really believe this actually happened but it seemed like an interesting “what if..?”)
“It is a tangled skein, you understand, and I am looking for a loose end.” “...striving... for the secret of rejuvenescence...” The friends of Mr. Sherlock Holmes will be glad to learn that he is still alive and well, though somewhat crippled by occasional attacks of rheumatism. (Watson’s preface to His Last Bow.)

“Few loose ends… But a pattern begins to emerge…”
Holmes smiled in satisfaction at his work.
And carried on in purl stitch.
“So he’s knitting,” said Mrs. Hudson.
“Believes it’ll rejuvenate his finger joints,” sighed Watson.
“And what’s... that... he’s making?”
“A waistcoat.” Watson’s shoulders slumped. “For me.”
Mrs. Hudson patted his arm.
“I’ll arrange a little washing ‘mishap’, Doctor.”

Less Excusable Habits

He was a man of habits... As an institution I was like the violin, the shag tobacco, the old black pipe, the index books, and others perhaps less excusable. “Always look at the hands first, Watson. Then cuffs, trouser-knees, and boots.”

“Blisters on your hands from holding handkerchiefs too tightly. Perspiration on your cuffs. Wrinkled trousers because you strapped tiny bells round the knees. And there are grass stains on your boots from a village green.”

I stared at Holmes in disappointment.

“You’ve been doing folk dancing again, haven’t you?”
Holmes bowed his head in shame. “It helps me to think!”
Information

…though he docketed any fresh information very quietly and accurately in his brain, he seldom made any acknowledgment to the giver.

Easter

“Violets!” beamed Mrs. Hudson. “How did you guess my favourites?”

Holmes smiled. “I have my methods.”

“’Methods’? I told you,” spluttered Watson later.

“Tsk,” said Holmes. “Does it matter how our lessons come to us?”

Christmas

“Buying me unmentionables! Mr. Holmes, it’s… unseemly!”

“But Dr. Watson said..!”

“Well,” said Watson, safely upstairs. “It appears Holmes has learnt a lesson.”

Baby

“I never get your limits, Watson,” said he. And once again I’ve given Holmes a traumatic childhood…

“I’ll never get your limits, Holmes. You were so good with the baby.” Watson looked thoughtful. “And you have no nephews, no nieces. No friends with children…”

“Your deduction, Doctor?” asked Holmes, looking up.

Watson hesitated. “A third Holmes brother. Who... didn’t survive infancy.”

“A sister.” Holmes returned to his writing. “With two protective older brothers, but who died anyway.”
The Three Garridebs: Romantic & Would Any Garrideb Please Contact..?

Romantic

_It may have been a comedy, or it may have been a tragedy._

“So you enjoyed the play?”

“So Watson, it was _glorious!_” laughed Holmes. “The comic misunderstandings! The melodramatic ending! I simply cannot comprehend why no-one else was amused.”

Still chortling, Holmes went to ring for supper.


“No, it’s just…” Watson hesitated. “I thought you were going to see ‘Romeo and Juliet’.”

Hopkins groaned quietly. “We _did._”

Would Any Garrideb Please Contact..?

_He had a cadaverous face, with… dull dead skin… “My doctor lectures me about never going out…” Behind his central table was a large cupboard of fossil bones. Above was a line of plaster skulls… “I had a brother, but he is dead, and female relatives are disqualified.” “I’ll call tomorrow, Mr. Nathan, and see you off to Birmingham.” He was last heard of at a nursing-home in Brixton. A zombie AU._

A ‘bite’ from a zombie’s skull led to (the late) Ezekiel Garrideb having to reinvent himself as Nathan, a long lost brother. But the decomposition progressed and while in Birmingham, Ezekiel’s frontal lobes disintegrated.

“I’ll advertise for his relatives,” his doctor sadly told the nursing home.

It was just unfortunate the transplant would have to come from a female brain.
The Illustrious Client: An Insoluble Problem & Under the Influence

An Insoluble Problem

Woman’s heart and mind are insoluble puzzles to the male. A little something for Valentine’s Day.

1 ACROSS the street: a charming gentleman
1 DOWN trodden landlady: invites him to supper
2 ACROSS the table appear: Holmes and Watson waving guns
2 DOWN under the table: “What the ‘H, something, something, L’, Mr. Holmes?!”
3 ACROSS the room: tenants chase gentleman
3 DOWN cast participants:
   “Help!”
   “Wait! It’s not the murderer!”
   “Drat!”
4 DOWN ing brandy: many cross words

Under the Influence

“…a [wo]man of personality can use hypnotism without any vulgar passes or tomfoolery.”


“Indeed,” murmured Mrs. Hudson. “Mr. Holmes, will you be performing any… noxious experiments tonight?”

“I was but…” Holmes yawned.

“You are feeling sleepy?”

Holmes frowned. “Mrs. Hudson—have you been performing your own experiment?”

“No, sir! Surely you can tell I am speaking the truth.” Mrs. Hudson leant forwards. “Just look into my eyes…”
The Three Gables: Outfoxed & The Late Mrs. Watson

Outfoxed

“Oh, if I had the money I would go round the world.”

_Such a sympathetic couple,_ mused Mrs. Maberley. _So sad they had lost their son too._

She settled herself at the hotel’s escritoire.

_And so charming. So hesitant and bashful when they suggested a donation to their hospital…_

Mrs. Maberley sighed and finished drafting her international telegram to Scotland Yard.

Unfortunately for _these_ foxes, this chicken was a tough old bird.

("One of the most dangerous classes in the world," said he, "is the drifting and friendless woman... She has sufficient means to take her from country to country and from hotel to hotel... She is a stray chicken in a world of foxes.” (LADY))

The Late Mrs. Watson

_Yours faithfully, Mary Maberley... Mary the maid heard the noise..._

My thoughts recently had been on Mary—the life we might have had together. And as if reading my mind a letter arrived, filled with tactful concern and inviting me to on a visit to Sussex.

I found my explanation in the postscript:

_In your latest story, my dear fellow, you gave both mistress and maid the same charming pseudonym._
The Blanched Soldier: Five Times Holmes’ Appearance Mattered and One Time It Didn’t & Extract from The Lancet, Sept 1903

Five Times Holmes’ Appearance Mattered and One Time It Didn’t

“Not one of them was a normal human being.” Five AUs, and an ending that could be for all of them.

1

“Did you see the new boy? Jewish blood there I think…”

2

(“A dwarf. Sad for the family.”)

3

“I’m afraid we cannot educate cripples.”

4

“His scarring would upset the others.”

5

“You have a daughter, sir!”

+1

“So… you don’t regret taking lodgings with me?”

“Why would I, Holmes? You appear to have the most astonishing mind.”

Extract from *The Lancet*, Sept 1903
A Case of Pseudo-leprosy by Sir James Saunders

After observing G.E. for several months, I must conclude his condition is unlikely to improve further. However, it has proved manageable with treatment and eased considerably during the summer.

My patient has found employment, is sharing lodgings with a friend and declares himself content.

I think I may consider this case closed.
Holmes’ Diary, Sussex, 1907

...Watson had passed almost beyond my ken. An occasional week-end visit was the most I ever saw of him. This 60 was also influenced by Constable Anderson’s moustache. Pairing: Watson/Lestrade.

1st February

Watson & Lestrade arrived today! Didn’t recognise Lestrade—he’s grown an enormous moustache.

2nd February

In the night, during… a warm embrace, Watson & Lestrade’s facial hair somehow became enmeshed. An amusing rescue mission ensued, involving myself and a pair of nail scissors.

How I laughed!

24th July

Watson & Lestrade still refusing to visit ever again. Pity.

Pick-Me-Up

More and more brandy was poured down his throat, each fresh dose bringing him back to life.

The pretty girl considered the slip of paper and got to work.

Orange slices… a tablespoon of sugar… Sherry and crushed ice… Shake well and strain into a glass…

“There you go!”

She added a straw and placed the cocktail carefully before Mrs. Hudson.

Mrs. Hudson raised an eyebrow. “Are you sure this is going to cure my lumbago, nurse..?”

(An interesting blog post: What did the Victorians drink? A guide to boozing in the 1800s)
The Retired Colourman: A Pair of Sparkling Eyes & An Abridgement Too Far

A Pair of Sparkling Eyes

“I can picture you whispering soft nothings with the young lady at the Blue Anchor, and receiving hard somethings in exchange.” Title from G&S’s “Take a pair of sparkling eyes” from The Gondoliers.

“Another chance for you, Watson.”

Holmes discreetly indicated the pretty young barmaid.

“I’ll go and interview the neighbours; you stay here and exchange sweet nothings for hard somethings…”

“So,” asked Holmes later, “did you get the ‘hard somethings’?”

“Indeed.”

Watson tipped up his hat to reveal two black eyes.

“The young lady’s right hook and left jab were both excellent.”

An Abridgement Too Far

"Cut out the poetry, Watson,” said Holmes severely.

“Too ‘poetic’?” I thrust my latest manuscript at Holmes. “There! You have my permission to edit it!”

Some days later Holmes returned my story.

“I think I have removed everything that was unnecessary,” he smirked.

I glanced at his work, then frowned. “I will never understand your sense of humour, Holmes.”

He had trimmed my story to exactly 60 words.
A Fairytale Christening

...those curious gifts of instinct and observation which I have endeavoured to set forth in these memoirs.

“...and I give him the gifts of instinct and observation,” smiled Fairy Hollyhock.

Fairy Moriarty stormed in.

“Not invite me, would you? When he’s 37, he’ll fall into a waterfall and die!”

“But!” said Fairy Doyle. “Only for three years!”

Mrs. Holmes sighed. “Fairy godmothers! Why can’t they choose something simple?”

Mr. Holmes nodded. “He loved Mr. Stamford’s cuddly Watson.”
Handy Guide to the Turf-ed Out

“Then I’ll make you my ‘Handy Guide to the Turf.’”

Odds of Sherlock Holmes not being bored:

9/1

Odds of bullets not ricocheting off Mrs. Hudson’s love seat:

4/1

Odds of not being summarily thrown out:

3/1

Odds of not regaining entrance after dark, via the pantry window:

1/1

Odds of Mrs. Hudson not waiting silently in the kitchen, armed with a broom:

I wouldn’t like to bet on it.

Kidding

SHOS was published in The Strand Magazine in 1927.

“The firm, austere expression of those who have to control horses or boys…”

Holmes laughed, and lowered his periodical to find Mrs. Clitheroe, the housekeeper staring down at him.

“Heavens! The exact expression!” He tossed the Strand onto the floor. “Though you don’t deal with boys and horses, of course.”

Mrs. Clitheroe stooped, retrieving the magazine. “Not horses anyway, sir.”
And that concludes Round 4 over at sherlock60! Thanks for reading ^^

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!