

SIDE 5 : THE COUNTESS and FANNIE

P27 "THE COUNTESS. Is everyone having fun tonight?" To P29 "THE COUNTESS. It's all right, Mr. Topper. Let him in. This is Mr. Sherlock Holmes."

HOLMES. Unless we find "H.B." in a matter of hours, which is highly doubtful, the bird will go to waste.

CRATCHIT. This attack happened outside Mr. Scrooge's house. Do you think the event is connected to his death?

HOLMES. Go to your hospital, Doctor. I shall handle this affair on my own. Do you understand?

CRATCHIT. I do, sir.

Holmes puts the hat on his own head.

LESTRADE. Be honest, Holmes. Is there a murderer on the loose?

HOLMES. Inspector. There's always a murderer on the loose.

LESTRADE. And where're you off to, now?

HOLMES. Me? I'm going to investigate—a Christmas carol.

The scene changes to a theatre. A curtain rises and a woman (Actor Four) appears in a spotlight. She is the Countess of Morcar, wonderfully elegant and grand with a hint of a mischievous, wild spirit lurking below the surface. She is dressed in an exquisite gown, with accents appropriate for the season. A small orchestra is in the midst of playing a jaunty selection. She is enjoying her audience. They are in the palm of her hand.

THE COUNTESS. Is everyone having fun tonight?

The audience cheers!

Oh! You're a lovely audience!

She picks up the music and sings!

*Here we come a-caroling
Among the leaves so green,
Here we come a-wand'ring
So fair to be seen.
Love and joy come to you,
And to you your wassail, too,
And God bless you, and send you
A Happy New Year,
And God send you a Happy New Year.*

On the twelfth day of Christmas

*My true love gave to me,
Twelve drummers drumming,
Eleven pipers piping,
Ten Lords a-leaping,
Nine ladies dancing,
Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five golden rings!*

...One moment. One moment, please.

She falters, looking out into the crowd. The musicians hold for her, momentarily confused. She spots someone in the back of the auditorium.

Well, well, well.

The Countess cues the little orchestra to start again.

*Four calling birds
Three French hens
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree!*

She finishes with some fanfare. Applause!

Thank you. That will be all! And a very Merry Christmas to you!

She goes to her dressing room, backstage. Fannie (Actor Two), her young dresser, helps her. The Countess sits at a vanity and wipes her makeup. She has an American accent.

FANNIE. Quite a show tonight, Countess.

THE COUNTESS. Thank you, Fannie. I thought to finish a bit early.

FANNIE. Are you all right, ma'am? There were two songs left, I believe.

THE COUNTESS. Yes, yes, I'm fine. I was just... I thought I saw an old friend in the audience, and it rattled me just a bit.

Holmes barges in, followed by Mr. Topper (Actor One), a whiskered man who is the manager of the theatre. The Countess stands.

MR. TOPPER. Excuse me! You can't come back here! This is a private dressing room!

THE COUNTESS. It's all right, Mr. Topper. Let him in. This is Mr. Sherlock Holmes.

FANNIE. The famous detective?

MR. TOPPER. I heard he was dead.

THE COUNTESS. ...So did I.

MR. TOPPER. Excuse me, Countess. I didn't realize he was your guest.

THE COUNTESS. It's all right, Mr. Topper. Civilians aren't normally allowed backstage. But Mr. Holmes is a special case. Might we have a moment alone?

FANNIE. As you wish, ma'am.

MR. TOPPER. I'll be right outside if you need me. Right outside.

Fannie and Topper exit. Sherlock and Countess stare at each other for a moment before breaking into furtive grins. The Countess laughs with giddy joy. There is a history here that is undeniable, deep and palpable.

THE COUNTESS. Ha! So, you're alive! I didn't believe the rumors, of course. Though, I'm sure it's quite a story. I take it Moriarty is dead?

HOLMES. To begin with.

THE COUNTESS. You look like a ghost yourself. Are you ill?

HOLMES. I'm... I've been better.

THE COUNTESS. Ah. I see.

He changes the subject. She lets him.

HOLMES. And what of you?

THE COUNTESS. Oh, Sherlock... You know me. I always manage to land on my feet.

HOLMES. You've married again?

THE COUNTESS. You can't expect me to wait around for my true love to come to his senses and propose.

HOLMES. A Count this time? Rather a step down from the King of Bohemia.

She picks up a small framed photograph propped on her vanity and smiles at it with true fondness.