

The Lifeline Audition Monologue Bank

SHERLOCK HOLMES from *Miss Holmes*

Dialect: Standard British (RP)

Lizzie Chapman has been receiving anonymous notes implicating her husband in the death of his previous wife. She has gone to Sherlock Holmes hoping to discover the identity of the notes' author, and to clear her husband's name. Sherlock, however, has a different take on the situation.

SHERLOCK: Please remember, that I have heard of your husband before. I am a voracious reader of the newspaper. I know that Thomas Chapman is considered by many to be the most efficient investigator in the Metropolitan Police Force. I know he has one of the highest arrest records in Scotland Yard. I know he has been investigated more than once on suspicions of corruption and brutality, but has never been convicted. And I know that he has been married three times, most recently to one Elizabeth Durham - that would be you, Mrs. Chapman - not two months after he was cleared of any wrongdoing in the death of his second wife, Katherine Featherstone, who drowned in a bathing pool at Hampstead Heath. He married her two years after his first wife, Margaret Cleary, was killed in a fall from a horse. Do I have that right so far? You want me to tell you that you have nothing to fear. You want me to tell you that this letter is nothing more than a harmless prank, inspired by petty jealousy. You want me to tell you to go home to your husband. Those are lovely shoes, Mrs. Chapman. Very high quality. Very expensive. You would not expect to see them on the feet of your average policeman's wife. But then, your husband is not your average policeman, is he?

McGaffin from *Middle Passage*

Dialect: Bristol/Cockney

Aboard the slaving ship, The Republic, run by the sadistic Captain Falcon, the crew have run into a number of scary and dangerous phenomena while carrying a mysterious tribe of Africans known as the Allmuseri. Tempers high and patience thin, the ship's boatswain, McGaffin, calls out first mate Cringle on his promise to mutiny against their Captain and take over the ship.

McGAFFIN: You're the one who can stow it, Cringle—or shove it! You and that self-servin' rummy Captain Falcon, too! Water was me woman before you was in long pants. I know trouble when I see it. Them Allmuseri is weird. A tribe of witches and strangelings. They can do things! And if you ain't not iced, sir, there's water under the keelson, one of the bloody winches is broken, 'sir', and the hand pumps are chokin' up. You're as good a shipmate ever put hand to sail, but God almighty, man, any tar on board'll tell you the skipper can't get this rotten piece of driftwood home. He'll drown the lot of us—and it's your business, I'm sayin', to put things right before it's too late. D'you know what I'm askin' you to do? D'you have enough skin for it? If you're too damn-fish'hearted to do what you promised, some of us who've had enough will!

Gabriel Syme from *The Man Who Was Thursday*

Dialect: Standard British (RP)

Syme, an undercover police detective working for Scotland Yard, has infiltrated a secret den of anarchists who are in the process of electing a new representative, codenamed "Thursday," to the Central Anarchist Council. Syme has decided to continue their mission by convincing the anarchists to elect them instead of Lucian Gregory.

SYME: Have we come here for this? Do we meet underground like rats, cover our walls with bombs and bar our door with death, for such milquetoast offering as this? "Courage and intellectual pressure?" "The better world we will create?" These are fine words, yes, if one is an archbishop. But the man who is fit to be an archbishop is not fit to be a serious anarchist. He is not fit to be a forcible and efficient Thursday. He tells us in the most apologetic tone that we are not the enemies of society. I say that we are the enemies of society, and so much the worse for society! We are society's oldest and most pitiless enemy! We are the Anarchist! We are not murderers, true, as Mr. Gregory points out. We are executioners. I will not mince words. I say that Comrade Gregory, for all his amiable qualities, is not fit to be Thursday. I say that he is unfit because of all his amiable qualities. Should the Central Council be a place for ceremonial politeness and modesty? I set myself against his election as I set myself against all the governments of Europe, because the man who has truly embraced anarchy has forgotten modesty. He has forgotten pride! Am I a man? No! I am a cause! I am as impersonal and resolute as one of the weapons on this wall, and I say that rather than have Gregory and his sentimentality infect the Central Council, I would offer up myself for election! I will not rebut the slander that we are murderers, I will earn it! To the priest who condemns our souls, to the judge who condemns our bodies, to the fat Parliamentarian who condemns our spirits, I would grip their throats and cry FALSE KINGS OF SOCIETY, MY NAME IS THURSDAY, AND I COME TO DESTROY YOU!

LUCIE from *A Tale Of Two Cities*

Dialect: Standard British (RP)

Lucie's new husband, Charles, has traveled to France during the Reign of Terror. Back home in England, Lucie has just received word that Charles has been arrested for the crime of being a member of the French aristocracy. Sidney Carton, frequently drunk and in love with Lucie, has just made an unfortunate comment about the situation.

LUCIE: Do you make a joke, sir? I did not give you leave to be so familiar! Why do you still come here? So many nights you have wandered here, moody and morose. When you care to talk, it is overshadowed by this cloud of caring for nothing. How weak you are in your misery. You make it sound as if Charles had a choice. He has oppressed no man. He has imprisoned no man. Rather than harshly exacting payment of his dues, he relinquished them of his own free will. He left instructions to his steward to give the people what little there was to give. And for this service, he is to be imprisoned. You believe he would abandon the happiness of his chosen home, the life he has made for himself, the family he has begun, if he thought there was a choice? If he did so, then he would not be the man I chose for my husband.

EFROSINIA from *Hunger*

Age: 20s-50s

Dialect: None

Efrosinia - a botanist trapped in Leningrad during the Siege. 1 million people would eventually starve to death because they were cut off from the rest of the country by the Nazi armed forces. They have never really spoken up before, but the immensity of the moment and the looming threat compels them.

EFROSINIA: The work. We must protect the work. Listen to yourselves. They have already cut rations twice. It is not even November. The same bombs that melted that sugar also destroyed 3,000 tons of flour. We were sending supplies to the Germans until the day before they invaded. Now Moscow has taken the rest. You joke about eating cats and dogs but it is already happening. I am not talking about giving up hope. I am talking about preserving it. Our work is hope. These seeds and our research are the only hope for our country. We need to discuss this. And we need to agree upon a course of action. Why are you all being so obtuse? People are already starting to go hungry. You only see the seeds as research. But what do you think is going to happen when people - starving people - hear we are sitting on top of the largest seed bank in the Soviet Union? When they finally put together that we are surrounded by food? First they said the Germans would never get this far. Now they say the siege cannot last. I do not believe them. We were unprepared. Many people are going to die. Perhaps all of us are going to die - What happens to us does not matter - Our work. The work we do here. Given time - our research is capable of changing the world. Or at least - possibly- creating the foundation for others to end hunger - maybe not in our lifetimes but maybe by the end of the century. We are the next step on the path to ensuring no Russian ever has to go hungry again. That is why we are here. We must protect that work. From the disbelievers. From those seeking political gain. And we must physically protect the stores from destruction. And from consumption. This is all I have. This is all I believe in. I cannot have my life be for nothing.

DOCTOR MANETTE from *A Tale of Two Cities*

Dialect: Standard British (RP)

Doctor Manette's daughter, Lucie, has just given the dissolute Sidney Carton a thorough dressing-down. Carton, in love with Lucie and at a loss for what to do next, asks Doctor Manette if Lucie meant the harsh words she had for him.

DOCTOR MANETTE: Did she mean it? Yes, I think she did. But do you know why? Because she is sure that you are capable of good things, gentle things, even magnanimous things. The only thing preventing it is yourself. Perhaps you have seen the common shoemakers' bench kept here? I once yearned so frightfully for that occupation, and it was so welcome when it came. No doubt it relieved my pain much, by substituting the perplexity of the fingers for the perplexity of the brain. I have never been able to bear the thought of putting it quite out of reach. Even now the idea that I might need that former employment and not find it gives me a sudden sense of terror. But does not the retention of the thing involve the retention of the idea? If the thing were gone, might not the fear go with it? I have a simple favor to ask you, regarding that shoemakers' bench. When we are gone, get rid of it for me.

ROCHESTER from *Jane Eyre*

Dialect: Standard British (RP)

England, 1835. Jane is about to be married to Mr. Rochester, when a visitor reveals that he is already married. Here, Mr. Rochester tries to explain to Jane the circumstances of that marriage.

ROCHESTER: I am a fool! She must see that I am not married, but I do not tell her why! Jane, listen. Did you ever know I was a younger son? That my father and elder brother were avaricious men who could not—would not—give me my fair share of the estate? But they were proud, too, the devil take them. So I was to make a wealthy marriage. My father had an old acquaintance, a Mr. Mason, a rich Jamaican merchant, who had a daughter who was the boast of Spanish Town for her beauty. I was married before I knew where I was. Oh, I have no respect for myself when I think of that act! I never loved, I never esteemed, I did not even know her! I was told her mother was dead. After the marriage, I learned my mistake. She was only mad, as my father and brother both well knew. Jane, I lived with that woman upstairs for four years, endured all the agonies of being bound to a wife both intemperate and unchaste...and in those four years, both my father and brother died. Think on it! I was rich enough now, but poor, so poor. Because the doctors had discovered that my wife was mad, and I therefore could not rid myself of her by any legal proceedings. You don't like my narrative? (BEAT.) One night, I was awakened by her yells. She had, of course, been shut up. It was a fiery West Indian night, the air was like sulfur. "This life," I thought, "is hell." I took a revolver up in my hand—then suddenly, the weather broke. The air grew pure. And I fixed a resolution. I would take the madwoman with me to England. I would place her in safety and comfort and leave her. I would travel the world and form what tie I wished. It was not my original intention to deceive. I meant to tell my tale plainly. But now you see how the case stands, don't you? After a life of unutterable misery, I have for the first time found what I can truly love—I have found you! You are my sympathy. My better self! Jane, Jane, just give me your promise. Say "Mr. Rochester, I will be yours."

JANE from *Jane Eyre*

Dialect: Standard British (RP)

England, 1835. Jane, a penniless orphan, has worked their way into an education and a position as a governess at Thornfield Hall, the home of the mysterious Mr. Rochester. Though it seemed like the master of house was taking an interest in Jane, he has just brought back to the mansion a large party of guests, including the beautiful Blanche. Rumor is that they are about to be married.

JANE: A greater fool than Jane Eyre never breathed the breath of life. You—a favorite of Mr. Rochester! You—gifted with the power of pleasing him! Listen, Jane Eyre to your sentence. Tomorrow you will draw in chalk your own picture, faithfully, without softening one defect. And then you will write under it Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor and plain. Afterwards take a piece of smooth ivory and in your most delicate pencils draw the loveliest face you can imagine, (Enter BLANCHE, beautifully attired. Under this next, she circles Jane mockingly.) according to the description given by Mrs. Fairfax. Remember the raven ringlets, the fine figure, the dark and brilliant eyes, the—no sentiment! No regret! I will endure only sense and resolution. And whenever in the future you should chance to fancy Mr. Rochester thinks well of you, take out these two pictures and compare them. (BEAT. JANE REMEMBERS.) I see them smile, laugh. It is nothing: the light of the candles has as much soul as their smiles. I see Mr. Rochester smile, and I look for their eyes to fall, their color to rise. But there is nothing. They were in no sense moved. He is not to them what he is to me. He is not their kind, as he is of mine. I am sure he is. I know I must conceal my sentiments, I know I must smother hope, I must remember that he cannot care much for me, but while I live and breathe, I must love him.

MYCROFT from *Miss Holmes*

Dialect: Standard British (RP)

Mycroft Holmes holds a position of power and influence within the British government, and needs to keep their sister Sherlock in check. Mycroft surprises Dr. Watson on the street, and offers her an arrangement that will allow her to continue working with Sherlock while providing Mycroft with information.

MYCROFT: Sherlock has offered you the room rent-free. I can agree to those terms on one condition: You will keep Sherlock out of trouble. It sounds simple; it is not. I want you to keep me apprised of what she does, where she goes, what piques her interest. You will be thorough. You will be discreet. She will try to talk you into doing things against your better judgment. She never listens to her own common sense, so you will have to do it for both of you. I know your father made a living as a tutor of classical literature and died when you were seventeen years old, leaving your family penniless. I know you enrolled at the University of Edinburgh against your mother's expressed wishes. I know you subsidized your education by publishing a novel under the pen name D.W. Graham, and while sales of the book were adequate enough to provide a modest living during your studies, you have been burdened by the costs incurred after the death of your mother while you were still in Switzerland. And I know about your brother. One of the unpleasant, lingering effects of suicide is that the bereaved are often denied pension benefits. As poor Henry's last surviving relative, I imagine you would have some substantial back pay owed to you as well. The army is notoriously tight-fisted when it comes to such things, but I could certainly loosen their grip in this case. But Miss Watson, I do wish to make clear the terms of this arrangement. You would be Sherlock's companion, but my employee. Today is a good day. If you find her behavior peculiar now, wait until a bad one. Good evening to you, Miss Watson. I expect to hear from you soon.

CATHY from *Wuthering Heights*

Dialect: Standard British (RP)

England, 1820. Cathy has set their sights on marrying Edgar Linton, the richest man in the county. But as Cathy explains to Nelly, the nurse, it is difficult to forget their first love, Heathcliff.

CATHY: Who can help loving Mr. Edgar? He's handsome. He is young and cheerful. And he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood. I will marry him. But you have not told me whether I'm right. (BEAT.) There is an obstacle. (TOUCHING HER FOREHEAD.) Here! (TOUCHING HER HEART.) and here! In whichever place the soul lives. Nelly, do you never dream queer dreams? I've dreamt dreams that have stayed with me ever after: they've gone through and through me, and changed my ideas. I dreamt once that I was in heaven, but I was unhappy there. Heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping; and the angels were so angry that they flung me back to Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret. I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if Hindley had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. But it would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him. Not because he's handsome, or young, or rich, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same. And even if I marry Edgard, I shall never lose Heathcliff. Who is to separate us, pray? Every human on the face of the earth might melt into nothing before I could consent to forsake Heathcliff. Edgar must shake off his antipathy, and tolerate him, at least. Nelly, if Heathcliff and I married, we should be beggars. Whereas, if I marry Edgar I can place Heathcliff out of my brother's power. You know there is an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of our creation, if we were entirely contained here? And I feel—if all the world perished, and Heathcliff remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger. Nelly, I am Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being. So don't talk of our separation again.

GEORGE from Room With A View

Dialect: Standard British (RP)

Set in England, 1908. George and Lucy shared a kiss in Florence, but urged on by her cousin Charlotte, Lucy rejected him because of his class. She is now engaged to the aristocratic Mr. Vyse. But George has been brought back into her social circle and is renewing his suit with Lucy, as cousin Charlotte looks on.

GEORGE: You cannot live with Vyse. He's only for an acquaintance. He should know no one intimately, least of all a woman. Have you ever talked to him without feeling tired? No, but have you ever? He is the sort who are all right so long as they keep to books and pictures—but kill when they come to people. That's why I'll speak out through all this muddle even now. It's shocking enough to lose you in any case, but generally a man must deny himself joy, and I would have held back if he'd been a different person. But in the National Gallery, when he winced because my father mispronounced Botticelli—then he brings us here, and we find it is to play some silly trick on a kind neighbour. That is the man all over—playing tricks on people, on the most sacred form of life that he can find. Next, I find him telling you, teaching you what's charming or amusing or ladylike and you, you of all women, listen to his voice instead of to your own. Therefore—not 'therefore I kissed you,' because the book made me do that, and I wish to goodness I had more self-control. I'm not ashamed. I don't apologize. But it has frightened you, and you may not have noticed that I love you. But therefore—therefore I settled to fight him. I know you will say that I'm trying to bully you too—this desire to govern a woman—it lies very deep, and men and women must fight it together. But I do love you surely in a better way than he does. Yes, really in a better way. I want you to have your own thoughts even when I hold you in my arms. Lucy—come to me as you came in the spring, and afterwards we can talk it through. I cannot live without you. 'No good,' I thought; 'she is marrying someone else.' But I meet you again when all the world is glorious water and sun. As you came through the wood I saw that nothing else mattered. I wanted to live and have my chance of joy. It is our last chance. I shall do all that I can. (TO CHARLOTTE.) You wouldn't stop us this second time if you understood. I have been into the dark, and I am going back into it, unless you will try to understand. It is being young. It is being certain that Lucy cares for me really. It is that love and youth matter intellectually.

TOM from *Pistols for Two*

Dialect: Standard British (RP)

England, 1811. In this comic English romp, Tom tells the tragic story of how they have been finagled into a scandalous elopement with an heiress that they've known all their life. Tom is quite drunk.

TOM: I'm eloping with an heiress. To Gretna Green. In truth, I don't think it's a wise step to take. But what's a fellow to do? I can't draw back now. Annabella's—she's the heiress—she's the one who wants to do it. Dreamed it all up after she read some mutton-headed book about a rich girl and a silly girl and an elopement and I don't know what all. Next thing I know, she wants to elope and there's no persuading her to listen to reason. Mind, though—you're not to be thinking that I wish to back out. I have loved Annabella for years. I swore a blood-oath to marry her when we were children. I just don't want to drive off to the Border with her—not just now, at least. My uncle has just this day invited me to Yorkshire for the grouse shooting. Only think what a splendid time I could have had. And I can't postpone the elopement until after the grouse shooting, because if we waited there would be no sense in eloping at all, because very likely Annabella will be tied up to the old foggy her father means her to marry. He's a friend of her father's. Nobody wants us to get married. Not her father. Not my father. So very likely I shall be cut off without a shilling and obliged to enter a counting-house or some such thing, but of course, females never consider anything of that nature! They have not the least common sense, besides thinking that it is perfectly easy to hire a chaise and four for midnight without making anyone suspicious. And it is not! Then I had to rack my brains to think how best to meet it, because it would never do to have it driving up to my house. At any rate, I told the post-boys to come to this inn at half-past eleven tonight. Annabella thinks everyone will be asleep by midnight and she is to meet me in the shrubbery. The shrubbery. At midnight. I can tell you, I never thought I should make such a cake of myself.