***Sherlock Holmes and Astral Travel***

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***Oscar Wilde Communicates***

***with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle***

***via Ouija Board***

[](http://inmemoriamc33.com/autumn_moon.mp3)***Willow-Ware Cup and Ouija Board***

***Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and a Visitant***

*Now that I am fully conscious of being deceased, I look about for something*

*to do. As spirits somewhat adrift in Purgatory, bored in the Afterlife, full*

*of* taedium mortis *in what Tibetan Buddhists call the ‘Bardo’ state,*

*Gabriel and I decide, like the famous ape, to try conclusions—conduct*

*an experiment, that is: attempt to communicate with the elusive Living.*

♫

*Scene: An astral version of Gabriel’s house. Our act of biomancy is performed*

*within a magic circle: a Great Wall of Blue China—many a vase. Time: 6 July, 1930.*

1.

To live up to the Blue Things, one

Must sometimes play the genteel shaman,

Gabriel, wielding with aplomb an

Arcane device. That’s how it’s done.

A piece of china we shall use,

And blue it shall be. We’ll turn up-

Side-down this willow-ware tea cup;

Its divinations will amuse

Us, I am sure, with their divine

Presumption, like an immature

But charming wine, brash and cock-sure

As those who, furthering their design

To trump up business with romance,

Invented Chinese legends, tales

For English designs, puffing sales

On the Free Market Sea. Let’s glance

Back at these fictions. As you know,

One of them is a fine love story,

The other a vision of calm glory.

Let’s see. How does the first one go?

2. *First Version: The Persecuted Lovers*

A Mandarin’s daughter falls in love

With his accountant, who, alas,

Is of the lowly servant class.

The father hardly would approve

The marriage, nor would ancient law.

This strict man builds a fence around

His daughter’s quarters. Ways are found

Around one they still hold in awe,

For love twice-dear is love forbidden.

So the young, loving couple dare

Elopement, to an island fair.

For years they live there safely hidden.

But by her father she, Koong-See,

Has been pledged to a Duke; he, spurned,

Vengeful, their whereabouts once learned

To the island sends his soldiery



Where in their house they trap the pair.

Their two melodious songs are muted,

By fire the lovers executed.

The gods who made them young and fair

Transform them into turtledoves

Flying above the willow tree,

Beside the temple, can you see?

And note the bridge that for their love’s

Sake they traverse into as fair

A Paradise as ever was

Doomed to be lost at length, alas,

A splendid lie to sell a ware

*Milton filtered through Thomas Minton?*

In eighteenth-century England, dear!

China? There’s no such thing, and there are

Certainly no such people. (Where are

Paper and pen? We’ll need them here.) *So I deny the existence of a* second *Far*

*Eastern nation of some importance. Languid*

*Conqueror, your Empire is expanding!*

3. *Second Vision: The Persecution of the Monks*

My Irish soul weeps as I tell

Of Shaolin Monastery, rased

By the Manchurians, who, amazed,

See monk souls pass out of that Hell

Of smoke and flame and in a boat

Fare to a lovely Blessèd Isle.

There, on a bridge, with tranquil smile,

Three Buddhas greet them as they float

To safety’s shore: the Buddha Past,

 Buddha to Be, Buddha Who Is.

Behold the City of Willows. Bliss!

All shall drink tea, with a repast

Of little rice-cakes; all shall steep

Therein the airy delicacies

And dream a thousand histories

In an eternal Safety’s keep.

\*

Thus there has been, more recently,

Stamped on bald porcelain the myth

That the motifs so monkeyed with

Revived a style which destiny

And clever monks had from perdition

Preserved. Of course, those soaring birds

Are the monks’ souls. No human words

Convey the beauty of this vision.

Though by a magic lantern cast

Upon a bedroom wall, the limelight

Wherein we dip our souls is time-light,

Sublimely present-future-past.

Golo goes riding o’er the brass

Door-knob, and there floats Genevieve

In the window, and two doves grieve

Upon a polished looking glass.

The legend of a legend, twice

Removed from real, concocted late,

Their never-love they celebrate

For ever on a floe of ice.

4.

Come, Gabriel, we shall attempt

To commune with the living through

The Ouija Board, that Manitou

Whose punctuation’s so unkempt.

We shall start by contacting my

Long-suffering scribe, good Arthvr V,

Who has persuaded Arthur C *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, member*

To take part in the Mystery. *of the Society for Psychical Research.*

But though we are brave, and have the will, oh where

Is that we seek, which way is true

North, which is the right path thereto?

We’ve map and compass. We’ve a willow-ware

Cup that the surface over-flies

Like the Dove called the Holy Ghost.

From Cadmus’ teeth hath grown an host

Of silent-speaking shapes. There lies

In front of us, to be less vague, a

Fine smörgasbord assortment of

Letters, ox-א to marked ת, *Pronounced ‘aleph’ and ‘tav’.*

A to Zed, Α to Ω. *‘Alpha’ to ‘omega’, of course.*

And just in case one day we need them,

The Chinese characters… A storm

Of hieroglyphs, cuneiform

Wedges—if only we could read them!

 Spirits dwell in them, as in crypts.

You surely know an Orientalist—

Some Eastern-mystic transcendentalist—

Who can translate the obscurer scripts?

5. *Gabriel*

*Just write them down as best you can,*

*Oscar. The spirits are urbane*

*Enough not to befuddle a brain*

*With words a philologian*

*Alone could disentangle of*

*Their sense. Take notes, and use them later*

*When you become the explicator*

*Of what comes from beyond, above,*

*Or who the Hell knows bloody whence?*

Even the Sibyl had to edit

Her Leaves, when, to maintain her credit

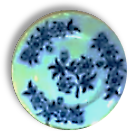
Amid the swift flow of events,

She made adjustments, day to day,

Small retroactive emendations…

To make precise prognostications,

The *clairvoyant* must be *au fait*.

And when it comes to what’s to come,

She is the queen of having it

Both ways, whom years have taught to split

The difference ‘twixt Yes, No, and dumb.

When a great general asked her whether

He ought to wage a war abroad,

DOMINESTES was what the Bawd

Of Wisdom answered. *Yes* together

With *No*, according to the grammar:

*Domine stes* means, Master, stay. *My alternatives during the Trials…*

*Domi ne stes* means, Go away.

*She is a clever hussy, damn her!*

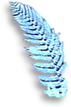
6. *Mr V ‘Comes Through’ How do the dead communicate with the living?*

*Sir Arthur will be with us soon.*

*He said he would be late*… No doubt

With Holmes he is out and about

Sleuthing by the light of the moon.



*You have convinced me that the dead*

*Are able to invoke the living.*

*But how and why? All this is giving*

*Some trouble to my muddled head.*

It was Josiah Wedgwood’s son,

Thomas, who gave us the sun-print, *In the 1770’s.*

Light stamped on silver nitrate. (Hint

Of photographs to come.) Thus on

The psychically sensitive plate

Of the mind ghostly light may stamp

A sort of moon-print. That pale lamp

Is the ghost of the sun. The weight

Of moonlight is a feather’s touch.

It is the light ghosts see by, since

Their day’s our night. Thus like the prints

Of ghost-light, like the indelible smutch

Of a dead thumb, my words impress

Themselves in silver on your mind,

A firefly-phosphor, yet a kind

Of radiance, nevertheless,

And like the stamp of willow ware

Are they, the pattern of a myth,

Sad legend one may conjure with

Of what’s no longer ‘really’ there.

*Ah there he is! Sir Arthur’s here,*

*And says he quite looks forward to*

*Conversing once again with you.*

Well, Gabriel, *coraggio*! ‘Steer’

The magic cup. Whilst my left hand

Rests upon yours my right will set *.*

Down what you spell. So we shall get

Intelligence of Terra Land.



7. *The Letters Assemble: Sir Arthur Speaking*

I AM SO PLEASED TO TALK WITH YOU

AGAIN OSCAR OH HOW YOU CHARMED

AND DAZZLED WHEN WE MET DISARMED

ENTIRELY WHAT COULD I DO

BUT LET YOU DO THE TALKING AND

TO LISTEN AS ONE LISTENS TO

MOZARTIAN MUSIC IN A NEW

TONALITY I’D SHAKE YOUR HAND

IF HANDS COULD REACH ACROSS THE ETHER

OR WHATSOEVER ELEMENT

ACTS AS STUBBORN IMPEDIMENT

TO THE TWO WORLDS’ COMING TOGETHER

I HAVE MET MANY BRILLIANT MEN

AND WOMEN NONE BUT YOU WAS QUITE

SO MUCH A GENIUS AND HOW BRIGHT

IS OUR GOOD MR V! AND THEN

THERE IS THE GENIUS BESIDE

YOU THE GREAT PAINTER-POET WELL

MET MY DEAR DANTE GABRIEL

I’M TEMPTED TO GO RUN AND HIDE

MY HERO IS AN AMATEUR

AND HARDLY AU COURANT IN MATTERS

SO RECONDITE AS YOU MAD HATTERS

ARE TRIFLING WITH WITH SUCH HAUTEUR

AND GENIALITY AND SENSE

OF FUN THAT THE AFTERLIFE SO SOMBRE

AT TIMES YOU SOMEHOW DISENCUMBER

OF ITS OLD BURDENS BUT OLD FRIENDS

MOTHER AND GALLANT SON ALL GONE

NO ART RECUPERATES THESE LOSSES

NO MATTER HOW HIGH THE SOUL CROSSES

OVER THE FATHER GRIEVES ALONE

MY HOLMES IS BUT A REASONER

WHO SOLVES SMALL PUZZLES WITH PANACHE

HE’S EARNED ME QUITE A BIT OF CASH

I’M HERE TO BE A LISTENER

It takes a genius to create

A genius. This much you have surely

Done. Tut, tut, you speak too demurely

Of what in its own way is great!

Now Holmes’s keen, mercurial mind,

Its quick, athletic causal leaps

(Hare busy whilst the tortoise sleeps)

Bears strong resemblance, of a kind,

To mine, although empirical

In cast, and reasoning with facts.

None but the rare and strange attracts

His art, he sees the Beautiful

In its aspect of sinister

Disguise, grotesque yet commonplace

Detail, the evil-boding face

Wherein the heroic Reasoner

Reads danger, and divines solutions

To one of myriad mysteries London

Teems with, ills done and somewhat undone

When given elegant solutions

In a detective tale’s sharp focus.

(An Irishman in all but birth,

You are a man of sterling worth.)

Yes, with his sober hocus-pocus

[](http://inmemoriamc33.com/khaki.mp3)Holmes is an artist, as an actor

Only by Irene Adler bested

In cunning and disguise, invested

In proletarian guise, as factor,

Navvy, old beggar on the docks…

And yet he takes cocaine and smokes,

And all the scales fall as he strokes

His violin, and truth unlocks.

♫

8.

MY HOLMES *DID* FEEL THE INFLUENCE OF

YOUR DANDYISM ISN’T THERE

A HINT OF DORIAN GRAY SOMEWHERE

IN THE HOLMES SAGA NOT ENOUGH

‘GRAY’ MATTER TO RECALL IN WHICH

STORY IT WAS I THOUGHT YOU ILL

IT WAS BEYOND YOUR POWER OF WILL

THE SICKNESS EVEN MADE YOU RICH

And poor. AH BUT THAT MRS SMITH *Hester Travers Smith in her book*

DIDN’T SHE HIT YOU OFF OLD BOY Psychic Messages from Oscar Wilde*.*

IT WAS AUTHENTIC WHAT A JOY --[Mr V]

TO READ YOUR LIVING WORDS A myth!

A lie! Self-propaganda! Sorry,

Dear Arthur, that was an uncalled-

For outburst. You must be appalled!

When will you write another story?

Late in the night, when all alone, and oil

Burns in the bedside lamp, ah, there’s

No cure for common, carking cares

Like settling in with cozy Conan Doyle!

I HAVE A BIGGER FISH TO FRY

IT IS THE URGENT QUESTION OF

THE AFTERLIFE OF THOSE WE LOVE

WHAT HAPPENS TO US WHEN WE DIE



9. *But Sir Arthur Remembers More Details*

YES HOLMES GREW MORE EPIGRAMMATIC

AND YES NOW I REMEMBER YOU

ARE THADDEUS SHOLTO THE TOO-TOO The Sign of Four *(1890)*.

AND WHAT’S MORE SINISTER AND DRAMATIC —[Mr V]

HOLMES TAKES A PAGE FROM DORIAN *‘The Adventure in the*

USING A DOUBLE OF HIMSELF *Empty House’ (1903).*

OF WAX TO FOIL THE EVIL ELF —[Mr V]

FROM IRELAND, THE OUTCAST MAN,

MORAN I THINK HIS NAME WAS YES

SEBASTIAN MORAN ‘THE WILD BEAST’

So you have gone and made a feast

Of my dishonoured corpse? Confess!

WELL I *DO* GIVE YOU CREDIT AS

THE ARTISTE WHO SCULPTED THE MADAME

TRUSSAUD-HOLMES OSCAR ‘S HIS FIRST NAME

HIS LAST? I FORGET WHAT IT WAS

OLD BOY MEMORY SO FREQUENTLY

FAILS ME OF LATE IT IS THE DEAD

I CAN RECALL ONLY THE DEAD

AND I AWAIT ETERNITY

Well, Gabriel, what do you think

Of all this? *What? I did not see*

*Lizzie. Where is she? Where is she?*

You’ll see her, rub your eyes, and blink. *Alas, his eyes, dim with chloral,*

*see nothing. They well up with tears.*

10.

HOUDINI’S FALLEN OFF HAS DROWNED

IN THE STEEL CHEST OF A CLOSED MIND

NO CLAIRVOYANCE COMES TO EYES BLIND

AS SAMSON’S SCEPTICISM-BOUND

I HAVE EXAMINED WITH THESE EYES

THE FAIRIES IN THE PHOTOGRAPH

LIGHT DOES NOT LIE THE SCEPTICS LAUGH *The Cottingley Fairies, larking*

BUT YOU ARE PROOF THAT NO ONE DIES *about in this 1917 photograph.*

11. *The Great War and the ‘Occult’*

After so many shameless years

Of carving up the world like an

 Enormous piece of marzipan

(One made of blood, sweat, gold, and tears)

It had to come, the time when they

Would fall to carving up each other,

Brother eat Continental brother,

And the great beast of Empire prey

Upon itself, wolf universal.

For this apocalyptic farce

The previous European wars

*Sir Arthur did not live to tell the world*

*of this psychical encounter. He died*

*of a heart attack the very next day*

*(7 July 1930). I trust he is with*

*his son, Kingsley, who was killed in*

*the Great War, and with other loved*

*ones long lost.*

Have been but tentative rehearsal.

CATASTROPHE THE GREAT POWERS FELL

INTO LIKE SLEEPWALKERS WITH NO

MORE REASONING THAN THAT OF SLOW

FESTERING BOILS THAT SWELL AND SWELL

TILL THEY AT LAST EXPLODE IN BLOOD

THROUGH THEIR OWN INNER TENSION BOILS

Of greed for those colonial spoils

That dragged all Europe through the mud

The Lads were really all such splendid

fellows indeed it never should

have happened for what earthly good

IN THE AFTERLIFE THIS *MUST* BE MENDED

12. *A Spirit Appears*

The armies of our grief and loss

Are lighting astral switchboards up

The apocryphal-yet-real teacup

Is moving fretfully across

The letters Garbled telegrams

Dead letters destined to be lost

Like the lives of our sons who crossed

The Channel sacrificial lambs

TO FEED THE CONTINENTAL MADNESS

OH NEVER IN THE HISTORY OF

THE WORLD HAVE THERE BEEN GRIEF AND LOVE

ON SUCH A SCALE SUCH WIDESPREAD SADNESS

Aching, bewildered desparation!

*His appearance alternates between that*

*of the child I loved and the grown man,*

*in a blood-soaked uniform, hiding his*

*face—and I know why! I know why!*

*Papa its Cyril sorry to*

*break in like this* Cyril, it’s you?

*those years and years the separation*

*I miss you better late than never*

*we meet again are you upset*

*you cant speak better to forget*

*good bye papa you were so clever*

[](http://inmemoriamc33.com/snowman2.mp3)

♫

***Mr V and I***

***Astral Travel***

1.

*Your absence haunts me. It sounds queer,*

*I know, but I feel quite chagrined.*

*You are intangible as the wind!*

*How strange to switch from there to here*

*And then to now so quickly in space*

*And time!* Death has its privileges.

We ghosts can move with startling ease

From age to age and place to place.

We fly, as ‘twere, on conscious wings—

Or drift, or float, if minded to.

Still, hawk-like, I return to you.

*You must have seen some wondrous things.*

2. *My Travels*

*Ah, let me tell you! I have seen*

*The tawny Ceylonese sunrise*

*Through a tea-planting girl’s sloe eyes;*

*Have watched the Nile, swift, emerald-green,*

*Surge past the ruins of the sacred*

*City that Akhenaten built,*

*Muscling a wealth of fertile silt*

*Down to the shores where the waves break red*

*And purple beneath dying suns.*

 *At Alexandria, deep under*

*The harbour waves, I’ve seen the plunder*

*Of time, the great stone blocks that once*

*Composed the wonder of the Pharos.*

*On high Mount Ida I have stood*

*Where Troy’s doom burned in the hot blood*

*And fateful judgment of young Paris,*



*And watched a Geisha girl in Kyoto*

*With exquisite composure pour*

*Tea for her warrior paramour*

*And pluck sad music from a koto.*

*(In a pavilion on the way*

*Down from Mount Fuji I have seen girls*

*Make love to girls. This part unfurls*

*As a print by Hiroshige.)*

*With the Aborigines I trace*

*Song-lines, I join them as they sing*

*Into existence Everything*

*That IS, and gather it into place.*



*I have seen the Dogon dance delirious*

*To honour the completed spin*

*Of its mysterious hidden twin*

*Around the raging Dog Star, Sirius.*

*I’ve watched (as strange as this may seem)*

*From the moon, with these ghostly eyes,*

*A pearl of calmest blue arise*

*From darkness like a solid dream,*

*And only slowly recognised*

*It as our planet, lone and small*

*In the void vastness of it all,*

*A fragile thing ah, to be prized!*

*As fragile as blue china, and*

*As rare—which how shall we live up to,*

*Who drain the tea, and break the cup, too?*

*Leaving our stain on sea and land.*

*And sometimes Ruskin joins me there.*

*Tears fill his eyes, and the earth-light*

*Trembles in them. The rest is night*

*And silence, stars, and breathless air.*

[](http://inmemoriamc33.com/bach_prelude3.mp3)

♫



***Musical Program***

**Page 2**

*Guzheng: Autumn Moon Over the Calm Lake.* (Performer unknown.)

**Page 11**

Collins and Leigh, *Now You’ve Got Yer Khaki On*. Sung by Marie Lloyd.

**Page 13**

Howard Blake, *I’m Walking in the Air.* Sung by Peter Auty.

**Page 15**

Bach, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I, No. 22: *Prelude in b flat minor.*