



# Sherlock Holmes Sorcery and Resurrection

**N**ot being an aficionado, when I picture Sherlock Holmes I see a thin middle-aged man with a deerstalker hat and a meerschaum pipe saying, “Elementary, my dear Watson,” to his graying sidekick. This probably comes from watching earlier films starring Basil Rathbone. Robert Downey Jr.’s version of the great detective blows my image to smithereens in a fun explosion of semi-comedic action that employs none of these stock preconceptions. But this Sherlock Holmes is apparently quite true to Conan Doyle’s original creation.

There has been an onslaught of reboots in the last couple of years. J.J. Abram’s *Star Trek* was a reprise of the classic TV series of the 60s, reimagining and reinventing the characters with a new storyline. Director Guy Ritchie here restarts the Sherlock Holmes character, with some finesse and a dash of flair. Indeed, Downey’s career itself has been rebooted, first as Tony Stark in *Iron Man* and now here as Holmes. From drugs to jail and back to stardom, he won the 2010 Golden Globe for best actor in a comedy for this role. These are two franchises that rely on the charm and charisma of the actor. Apart from him, both would be less enjoyable.

Ritchie’s Sherlock Holmes is as strong physically as he is mentally. This comes across clearly in a

bare-knuckle fight scene. In the ring with a brute of a boxer, surrounded by gambling Cockneys, Holmes is simply playing with the man until his patience wears thin. Then Ritchie shows Holmes thinking through his planned moves and counter moves like a chess grand-master, elaborating the extent of the upcoming injuries, all in a stop-action visual approach. Once satisfied with his attack, Holmes executes it swiftly. What a kick, literally! This is Holmes the brawler. That is part of the fun, as Ritchie lets us see from Holmes perspective, giving insight into the man and his phenomenal thinking.

His renowned powers of deduction are underscored in a terrific restaurant scene. While waiting to be joined by his friend and sidekick Dr. Watson (Jude Law) and Watson’s fiancée Mary Morstan (Kelly Reilly), Holmes observes the room

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with literally all his senses. The camera moves around slowly, in close-up. We see, we hear, we almost smell, all that Holmes is sensing. When Watson and Morstan join him, she requests that he tell her all that he can deduce about her from observation. Not a good idea, as Watson points out. But she insists. When Holmes delivers his detective observations, it is more than she bargained for. He cannot control observing and deducing. This is both a gift and a curse.

This brings us to one of the highlights of the film: the chemistry between Holmes and Watson. Downey and Law hit it off as a pair who have moved beyond superficial friendship. They are like the odd couple, knowing each other better than a married pair. When Holmes gripes, "You've never complained about my methods before," Watson retorts: "I've never complained! When have I ever complained about you practicing the violin at three in the morning, or your mess, your general lack of hygiene, your experiments on my dog, or the fact that you steal my clothes?" Dripping sarcasm, they are comfortable with each other, vices and all. Although Watson brings more of the comedic relief, the film is stronger when he is with Holmes on screen.

*Sherlock Holmes* opens with the capture of Lord Blackwood (Mark Strong). A confessed serial killer and sorcerer, he is convicted and sentenced to execution. At his hanging, Watson is the attend-

ing physician certifying his death. When Blackwood mysteriously returns from the dead, as alive as ever, fear descends on London, along with more killings. The mysterious magician brings his occult powers and dastardly plans into very the heart of government. Holmes and Watson have their work cut out

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to solve the puzzle and avoid a disaster.

Magic, sorcery and occult form the backdrop for Blackwood's plans. Generally, magic is not real; it is usually sleight-of-hand trickery relying on distraction or mechanical preparations. Most magicians today are simply capable tricksters. Sorcery, or black magic, on the other hand is the use of supernatural powers through the aid of evil spirits. Broader still, the occult is the supernatural and its affairs considered as a whole.

Biblically, magic is considered in a similar way. The magicians of Pharaoh's Egypt could emulate some of Moses' miracles through their secret arts (Exod. 8:7) but it is sorcery that carries a strong warning: "Do not practice divination or sorcery" (Lev. 19:26). Involvement with sorcery opens the door to the forces of evil (Eph. 6:12). The biblical writers are in full agreement that there are spiritual beings that are evil. Led by the one called Satan (1 Chron. 21:1), these creatures, or demons, have powers beyond ours (Mk. 5:4) . . . but not beyond God's (1 Jn. 4:4). Though sometimes people tap into these powers via sorcery, it is a dangerous thing as they are aligning themselves with the devil and against God. Satan's ultimate destiny is the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10), and his servants and allies will suffer a similar fate (Rev. 20:14).

As the film progresses and moves to its conclusion Irene Adler (Rachel McAdams) comes on the scene. One complaint is that she is never really introduced. We don't learn her back-story, and her relationship with Holmes is unexplained. She was not pervasive in the books, although she did appear in a few. It is unclear if she will be back in future installments. This one leaves her and Blackwood hanging in the wind.

A final biblical parallel comes from Blackwood himself. He rose from the dead. There is allusion to resurrection. The biblical accounts identify a number of people who were raised from the dead. The prophet Elisha raised the dead widow's son (2 Ki. 4:32-35). The apostles Peter and Paul did similar miracles: Peter raised Tabitha (Ac. 9:40), while Paul brought Eutychus back to life (Ac. 20:8-10). Jesus called Lazarus from the tomb after he had been

there three days (Jn. 11:38-43). However, these were all revivals, not permanent resurrections.

The pinnacle of resurrection is Jesus himself. After being beaten, flogged and crucified (Matt. 27:26-44), he was laid to rest in a fresh tomb (Matt. 27:60). But three days later he appeared, alive again, to the women (Matt. 28:9), then the disciples (Matt. 28:17). He had predicted his resurrection from the dead (Jn. 2:19; Lk. 24:7), and he fulfilled it. And unlike the resurrection of Lazarus, Tabitha, or all others for that matter, Jesus did not die again. His new life was eternal.

More than this resurrection, though, Jesus stated categorically, "I **am** the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (Jn. 11:25-26) He offers resurrection life to all who would believe in him. His question stands before each of us, "Do you believe this?" Would we be like Lord Blackwood or Lord Jesus?

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