

Beryl Garcia Stapleton
Hounds of the Baskerville(sic)
Julie McKuras

I've often thought that mystery and detective stories aren't interesting or plausible unless someone - the detective, the villain, or the victim – made mistakes. Tonight I'd like to propose a toast to someone who is in a class of her own when it comes to bad judgement.

Our lovely Spanish blooded uncommon beauty, a point Dr. Watson never fails to include, with a curious lisp is certainly a mistress of missteps and miscalculations. We first meet this siren of slip-ups and supposedly sisterly affection along with Dr. Watson when, in a case of mistaken identity, she warns Watson, not Sir Henry, to leave Dartmoor and go straight back to London. The good doctor might have been taken in by her subterfuge of sibling attachment, but Holmes knew the truth. That Costa Rican charmer was no sister, she was the wife of a shamed Baskerville's son and had a past littered with aliases, aiding and abetting her criminal, cheating, lying, and sadistic husband.

She first posed as Mrs. Vandeleur while her scoundrel of a spouse opened an ill-fated school in England's north country before assuming another pseudonym in the south. As the supposed sister of an entomologist she played a part in the scandalous scheme her husband devised to steal the Baskerville estate. He was a man not only comfortable with the idea of mistreating his wife, and slaying Sir Charles and Sir Henry, and couldn't even be described as good to his dog.

Our lovely lady kept her husband's secrets and acted as his accomplice, failing to implicate her significant other. We might ask if was love or fear that kept her by his side, but Holmes tells us that these are not incompatible emotions and we know of his cruelty and mistreatment toward her. In the end, her spirited jealousy and suspicions of another sweetheart led her to that well known phrase "till death do us part" when she exposed her husband's secret sanctuary in the Moors and forever separated from the hellish brute known as Jack Stapleton. Ladies and gentlemen, let us raise a glass to a victim and a villain, Beryl Garcia Stapleton.