

= His Last Vow =

" His Last Vow " is the third and final episode of the third series of the BBC Television series Sherlock , which follows the modern @-@ day adventures of Sherlock Holmes . The episode was first broadcast on 12 January 2014 , on BBC One . It was written by Steven Moffat and directed by Nick Hurran with music composed by Michael Price and David Arnold . The episode is a contemporary adaption of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle 's short story " The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton " .

In the episode , Sherlock Holmes (Benedict Cumberbatch) and John Watson (Martin Freeman) take on a case about stolen letters . This leads the pair into conflict with Charles Augustus Magnussen (Lars Mikkelsen) , a media mogul specialising in blackmail whom Sherlock despises . Holmes and Watson try to get Magnussen arrested , but their attempt fails when they confront him at Appledore , Magnussen 's home .

On its first broadcast on BBC One , the episode received 11 @.@ 37 million viewers , a 32 @.@ 1 % audience share . Although this was a drop from " The Sign of Three " and " The Empty Hearse " , it became the most tweeted @-@ about single episode of a drama series in the UK . The episode received critical acclaim , and Mikkelsen 's performance as Magnussen , in particular , was praised . For their performances in the episode , Cumberbatch and Freeman both won the Emmy Awards for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Miniseries or a Movie and Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Miniseries or a Movie , respectively . Moffat also won the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing for a Miniseries , Movie or a Dramatic Special for his work on the episode .

= = Plot = =

John Watson , whose wife Mary is now visibly pregnant , finds a disheveled Sherlock Holmes in a crack house under the influence of drugs . John attempts to force him to rehabilitate , but Sherlock insists that he was undercover for a case . Mycroft confronts Sherlock about the drug use and realises that Sherlock is investigating Charles Augustus Magnussen , a newspaper owner who blackmails people . Sherlock has been enlisted by Lady Elizabeth Smallwood to negotiate the return of stolen letters written by Smallwood 's husband . Mycroft warns Sherlock not to go after Magnussen , which Sherlock dismisses .

John is also shocked to discover that Sherlock is in a relationship with Mary 's bridesmaid , Janine . Sherlock tells John that he is dating her because she is Magnussen 's personal assistant , and he uses their relationship to assist him with breaking into Magnussen 's office in London . Inside , Sherlock and John find an incapacitated Janine , and Sherlock happens upon Mary holding Magnussen at gunpoint . Mary shoots Sherlock , who harnesses all his mental powers to stay conscious . He is taken to hospital . In his mind palace , Sherlock fades away , at the same time in the real world Sherlock dies on the operating table in pre @-@ op preparation . In the mind palace , Moriarty convinces Sherlock that he 's letting John down by dying , which convinces the mind palace Sherlock to get up and escape . At this time , in the real world , Sherlock 's heart begins to beat again . The surgeons attempt to help revive him , by giving him oxygen . Sherlock wakes up in surgery and mouths " Mary " . Mary comes into the hospital and is met by John , who says that Sherlock had survived surgery . Mary visits the exhausted and in critical condition Sherlock and warns him not to denounce her . John nonetheless begins to suspect something after he finds that Sherlock replaced John 's chair in the Baker Street flat and left a bottle of Mary 's perfume on the table next to it .

Sherlock slips out from the hospital and arranges a meeting with Mary . Using a ruse , Sherlock exposes Mary 's secret life as an assassin to John , and all three return to Baker Street to sort it out . She tells them about her past , and that Magnussen has information on her that would put her in jail for the rest of her life . Sherlock deduces that she intentionally shot him in a non @-@ lethal spot and called an ambulance . Sherlock tells John that he observes John 's addiction to danger and that John was most probably attracted to Mary because of her hidden past . Mary gives John a memory stick containing information on her , marked with her true initials A. G. RA . , telling him the contents

will destroy his love for her . After not viewing the memory stick for a few months , John decides to destroy it without reading it and to love Mary regardless . The couple spend Christmas with the Holmes brothers at their parents ' home , where Sherlock takes the opportunity to drug everyone but John so that they can steal Mycroft 's laptop . Sherlock takes a confused John to meet Magnussen at his estate , Appledore , which he believes contains Magnussen 's blackmail archive . During their confrontation , Magnussen explains his purpose in putting pressure on Mary was to arrive at Mycroft via John and Sherlock . He also reveals that he was behind the kidnapping of John , as seen in " The Empty Hearse " .

Sherlock offers to trade Magnussen 's information on Mary for the state secrets contained in Mycroft 's laptop . However , Magnussen is aware that Sherlock is setting him up in a trap . Magnussen then explains Sherlock 's plan to John ; security services looking for the laptop using a GPS tracker it contains will raid Appledore and , upon finding the laptop , will have a legal reason to search the blackmail vaults . Magnussen , with considerable glee , reveals that the plan will not work because Appledore 's vaults don 't physically exist , but are stored in his Mind Palace . By giving Magnussen the laptop , Sherlock and John are now guilty of attempting to sell government secrets and can be imprisoned for high treason , whereas Magnussen remains legally untouchable . When Mycroft and the police arrive , Sherlock shoots Magnussen in the head , having realised that this is the only way to free his friends and everyone else from his power .

Mycroft convinces the government to spare Sherlock a trial and , as an alternative punishment , press him into a highly dangerous mission in Eastern Europe . He is , however , recalled within minutes when TV screens all over Great Britain are hacked to broadcast a loop of a static image of Jim Moriarty asking " Did you miss me ? " A post @-@ credits scene shows a very much alive Moriarty asking if the audience missed him as well .

= = Production = =

= = = Casting = = =

In July 2013 , it was announced that Danish actor Lars Mikkelsen would star as the main villain of the third series of Sherlock . Mikkelsen first appeared in a non @-@ speaking cameo appearance at the end of " The Empty Hearse " . The portrayal of Magnussen was described by Steven Moffat as " terrifying " . Mikkelsen was suggested for the role by producer Sue Vertue and recorded an audition video for the production team in which he urinated in his barn . Mikkelsen was starring in a film set in East London at the time and had picked up a London accent , so he had to " re @-@ Dane @-@ ify " his accent .

Moffat and Vertue 's son , Louis Moffat , played a young Sherlock in two scenes and Benedict Cumberbatch 's real @-@ life parents , Timothy Carlton and Wanda Ventham , reprised their roles as Sherlock 's parents from " The Empty Hearse " . Steven Moffat has commented that Sherlock " runs on nepotism " .

= = = Writing = = =

Steven Moffat confirmed that the cliffhanger , the return of Moriarty , had been planned as far back as series two , when he discussed the plan for Moriarty 's character with actor Andrew Scott . However , he joked that he was as surprised as the viewers to see Moriarty return , noting that it is impossible to fake shooting oneself in the head . Scott appeared in a short post @-@ credits scene talking to the camera , both firsts for the show . Moffat has commented that viewers will have to wait " years " to see the resolution of the cliffhanger .

Gatiss and Moffat had considered adapting the character of Charles Augustus Milverton for some time , considering him to be a " brilliantly realised " villain . Moffat viewed Magnussen as Sherlock 's " intellectual mirror " and a " unique baddy " , and stated that he fell in love with him . The character of Magnussen was originally conceived as an American retaining the name of Milverton , but Moffat

changed both his nationality and name when Mikkelsen was cast . He found the name Magnussen on a website of Danish names , looking for one that resembled Milverton , the name of the original character from Doyle 's short story . Gatiss noted that the character is a " fascinating new place to go " due to his differences from Moriarty . When Mikkelsen received the script , he stated that his first impression was that it was " the best script I 've ever read " . Contrasting Magnussen to Moriarty , Cumberbatch stated that he was " so chilling because of how real he is , how normal he is " , and that he is " not driven by a mad , chaotic joker 's energy that Moriarty has " .

On the introduction of young Sherlock , Moffat noted that it was the logical course to take after the introduction of the Holmes parents : " Once you 've got the parents in and you 've got the sibling rivalry and stuff , people start to think , ' well what was young Sherlock like ? ' You just want those things , you want to see those things , it 's part of updating it . "

== = Filming == =

Director Nick Hurran had previously worked with Steven Moffat on several episodes of Doctor Who , including the fiftieth anniversary special .

Filming for " His Last Vow " began on 29 July 2013 . Some filming was in Cardiff , and part in Leinster Gardens , where houses 23 and 24 were shown to be mere façades . Scenes set at ' Appledore ' , Magnussen 's house , were filmed at Swinhay House in Gloucestershire , owned by Sir David McMurtry , boss of Renishaw engineering .

The post @-@ credits scene ? depicting Moriarty (Andrew Scott) saying " Miss me ? " to the camera ? was originally longer , but was cut at Gatiss 's recommendation to tease the audience .

== Broadcast and reception ==

The last Sherlock episode of series 3 , " His Last Vow " was first broadcast on BBC One on Sunday 12 January 2014 between 8 : 30pm and 10 : 00pm GMT . Overnight , the episode was watched by 8 @.@ 77 million viewers , a 31 @.@ 9 % share , which was down from 9 @.@ 2 million (33 @.@ 8 %) for the opening episode of the series , " The Empty Hearse " . However , when final ratings were factored , it increased to 11 @.@ 38 million , the same as " The Sign of Three " , but still down from " The Empty Hearse " . The episode was later repeated on the digital channel BBC Three on Friday , 17 January 2014 from 9pm GMT .

The British Board of Film Classification gave the episode a 12 certificate , for " moderate violence , drug references and one use of strong language " . The episode was released in the UK on DVD and Blu @-@ ray Disc with the other episodes in the series (" The Empty Hearse " and " The Sign of Three ") on 20 January 2014 .

== = Critical reception == =

" His Last Vow " received critical acclaim , with Louisa Mellor of Den of Geek saying that the episode was " as good a finale as Sherlock 's ever had " , with a very strong plot . Mark Jefferies of The Mirror called the episode " easily the best yet in this run " , with a " fascinating " plot . He also praised Mikkelsen as " brilliant " . Josh Wilding , also writing for The Mirror , said the episode " was in many ways the best episode of Sherlock yet " and called it " simply one of the greatest TV shows of all @-@ time " , giving it 5 / 5 . Caroline Frost of the Huffington Post called it a " fitting finale to the series , with writers and actors all saving their best for last " , despite the third series ' " patchy " performances . Serana Davies of The Telegraph called the episode " the best of the lot " and gave 4 out of 5 stars , calling Moffat " the superior Sherlock writer " . Although her review was mainly positive , she questioned whether the programme had become " a little vain , rather a show @-@ off " . Lucy Mangan of The Guardian said the episode was " perfect " , and a " ceaseless flow of wit , invention and intelligence " , a sentiment echoed by Ellen Jones of The Independent , who stated that it contained " intelligence , humour and obscure fanboy references galore " which " delivered the goods " . She went on to state that it is " enough detail in this episode to justifying watching it

again and again , once weekly , until series four " . Chris Harvey of The Telegraph praised the " beautifully done " conclusion of the episode featuring Moriarty , saying it was " very playful , very neat . And very unexpected " . Sandipan Deb , writing in Indian newspaper Mint , was positive about the episode , calling it " the best " episode in the series , and praised its " stunning twists and turns , its thrilling upending of what we have known about the characters for a lifetime , an emotional depth not seen before , and its clever throwaway references to the Canon " . Deb also praised the " uber @-@ cool cinematic technique " , singling out the moment when Sherlock has been shot and falls to the floor as an " extraordinary leap of the imagination and cinematic bravura " . However , it was stated that the writers were " influenced by the zoned @-@ out Holmes films directed by Guy Ritchie " .

However , Neela Debnath , also of The Independent , said that the episode was " trying far too hard and is coming across a tad foolish " , and consequently " failed to hit new heights " . Despite this , she did praise Mikkelsen as Magnussen , calling his performance " sterling " . Jeff Jensen of Entertainment Weekly took issue with Sherlock killing Magnussen at the end , instead of outsmarting him , viewing it as out of character : " He [Sherlock] had the smarts to brainstorm more inspired solutions to the problem of Magnusson [sic] , and the seasoning to resist a degrading one " . An article in the Daily Mail penned by Tom Kelly , claimed that the episode was symptomatic of the BBC 's " left @-@ wing bias " , arguing the episode 's villain , Charles Augustus Magnussen , was portrayed as a capitalist , foreign @-@ born newspaper baron , with similarities to Rupert Murdoch . Media commentator Roy Greenslade contextualised the criticism by suggesting the BBC , rather than Sherlock , is the Daily Mail 's " real enemy " . The episode angered fans as it had removed the woman who , in Doyle 's story , had shot Milverton . After the airing of " His Last Vow " , Moffat and Gatiss said in an interview with Empire Cinemas :

Moffat : Also , if you read [The Adventure Of] Charles Augustus Milverton , Dr. Watson in the opening paragraph tells you that he 's about to tell you a porkie . He says , ' I even now must be very reticent . ' I think what Doyle is hinting at is that Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson sat in Baker Street and said , ' Right , we 're going to have to go and kill him , aren 't we ? That 's the only way we can do this . ' So they break in , kill him , and then Dr. Watson writes up a version of the story that puts the murder [on someone else] .

Gatiss : They 're hiding in their burglar masks behind the curtain , and this random woman comes and shoots Milverton in the face and then grinds her heel into his face . It 's odd , isn 't it ? So I mean really , it 's just an extrapolation of saying , ' Well , he probably did it , I think . '

Moffat : If Sherlock Holmes decided that somebody should die , he would kill them . I don 't think he 'd have any problem with that .

Gatiss : He regards Milverton as a sort of plague , something that should be eradicated .

Gavia Baker @-@ Whitelaw , writing in The Daily Dot , said that the removal of a female character was " An unfortunate occurrence that neatly fits in with Moffat 's track record with female characters in both Doctor Who and Sherlock " , Baker @-@ Whitelaw goes on to question whether Mary could have killed Mikkelsen , instead of " playing right into the hands of fans who believe Moffat is a misogynist who writes all of his female characters into the same corner " , and questions whether Moffat is indeed a misogynist .

Steven Moffat 's writing , said Emma Dibdin of Digital Spy , is " a few degrees colder than his colleagues ' " , which helped the episode go back to the " cerebral , mystery @-@ driven tone some viewers have been left craving " . Paul Jones , of the Radio Times , praised Moffat 's " grand , filmic episode " , whilst Daniel Krupa , writing for IGN , said the episode was a reminder of " just how brilliant Sherlock [...] can be " .

= = = Accolades = = =

" His Last Vow " was nominated for several Emmy Awards and several Critics ' Choice Television Awards . At the 4th Critics ' Choice Television Awards , the episode was nominated in four categories . At the 66th Primetime Emmy Awards , " His Last Vow " won seven Emmys , the most for any TV programme .

