

a study in something beyond yourself

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Tags:

Moriarty the Patriot; Sherlock Holmes/William James Moriarty; Inspired by Short Story: The Unwanted Guest – Tamsyn Muir, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Character Study, POV Second Person

An empty house. Dark, the windows broken and blocked by torn-out floorboards. A house held together by itself. Is it working? Does it matter? The house isn't real, anyways. Well, not truly. The house is you but you are yourself and yourself lies within the charred, spindle-bone remains of a place you witnessed go up in flames, long before you took the matchstick in hand. Years before. An entire lifetime ago; a whole life ago.

YOU step onto the stage, which is yourself, which is not yourself at all. Which doesn't make sense. Which isn't important at all. What matters is that the stage is a negative space, yet filled to the brim with that same emptiness.

YOU are William James Moriarty. The Lord of Crime. As known as _____, maybe you've heard of him. Probably not. He died long before he took up his new mantle, you know? A lot of things happened between the then and now. It was riveting how much room a life could take up, and at the same time, how little. His life seemed enormous, sprawling with grandiose gardens and golden staircases, but really, it was the size of a boot case. Small, forgettable, prone to gathering dust. You gathered dust. You coughed with it, in secret, after you returned from your day job or an event you didn't bother remembering or a conversation with somebody who had nothing else to heap upon you than praise. The irony.

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“You couldn’t hurt a fly, I’m sure!” The irony.

YOU—

Why me?

YOU stop short. YOU, William James Moriarty, observe nameless, featureless citizens — ragged clothes, ragged hands, ragged souls — change the room you’ve found yourself in. They bring out a door without a frame, undo the work done to keep the windows concealed, attach curtains to the wall and lift a sofa onto the stage. You don’t move to prevent it from happening; whatever was going down was beyond your realm of influence. Your entire existence had been, from Louis’ hindered heart to the unfortunate fact that you were quite intelligent. Perhaps even your own birth was a lamentable thing.

Why me, I wonder?

YOU sigh. The nameless, featureless citizens line up before you, bow deeply, and as they part, they reveal a figure in their midst. From above, a light shines down on HIM: The great detective you have chosen as yet another piece in your play, a role’s empty slot to fill. That was all he should have been to you. By all means, you should’ve chosen him, as you did, and gone about your miserable life as always. You shouldn’t have seen him again— once, twice, thrice, until the meetings all blurred together in your mind, and you felt as though a door had opened within your consciousness. A door to a place heretofore uncharted. A wasteland: a wide plain — A ruined country: an emotional ground zero — A million people, long bygone, haunting you: a million others, waiting for you at the table, because of course you feel asleep while working on a theorem; of course you were a little late; of course they’d reserved a spot for you anyways. Of course there was love in their eyes, and it was all for you.

YOU never thought you’d feel love again. Not one that wasn’t the purloined sort.

Why me? Tell me, why did you decide it had to be me?

YOU do not know how to answer the question. You open your mouth nonetheless, because stupidity lies in humanity’s nature, and you were a human first and foremost. Even before you proclaimed yourself as the last devil to be swept off the earth, before you stole a name and a family that never belonged to you, before you realised there was no justice to be had:

You were human.

Please. I shan't rest easy until I know.

YOU think you might never rest easy if you didn't see him every day: Him — London's light — also, first and foremost: Sherlock Holmes.

YOU smile. The nameless, featureless citizens slip down the stairs on either side like water, until all that is left are you, him, and simple furniture. His rooms at the 221B residence weren't as sparse as depicted here, but maybe this was how you'd wanted it. Nothing to stand between you, no clutter, no papers to stumble over. Nothing to take away from the fact you'd chosen to walk this path, and would follow it to the end. Well.

YOU assume you would.

A lighter flicks open. The end of a cigarette glimmers like a fallen star.

Tell me: You could've chosen an actor, right? Someone talented enough, someone like Bonde.

Only for a limited time. Every actor eventually stumbles, especially when faced with unforeseen circumstances. Our plan wouldn't have worked out in the long run, and we couldn't have hired somebody else at short notice. It would've aroused suspicion.

My brother, then. What of him?

Mycroft Holmes had another role to fulfil. And he did so splendidly, I must admit.

Oh, stop glazin' him. He's not that amazing.

Is this the younger brother speaking, or the great detective?

Who cares? Answer's the same.

What is your answer?

A quiet snort. Smoke curls around his cheekbones like early morning fog. YOU could understand why John Watson had written him the way he did in his books. There was a certain air to someone unreachable, someone you thought you would only ever see from the sidelines. Oh— You should have stayed there. You'd always known your place, so why not now? Why was this time different? Why did you pursue him instead of treating him as you should've done; why had you wolfed down every tidbit of information about his life in the city like a starving man?

Your heart was so heavy.

I guess I'll tell you mine if you go first, Liam. Why me?

Your soul was so tarnished.

What made me so special in your eyes? Why did you need it to be me?

And your hands, when you look down upon them, were drenched in red as always. YOU do not remember a time where they hadn't been. Even as a child, when you were afraid Louis would leave during the night: you would've blamed yourself without hesitation.

It had to be you, because—

The lights go out at once. Then they return, and you are both standing in the middle, inches away. Around you, the white draws a stark border between your shared exhales and the endless night outside.

YOU needed him, because—

You stood on the same horizon. You had caught a gaze from across a ballroom, staring up at a beautiful staircase, and he'd known why you'd done it. He'd seen you, in all your refined poise, and chosen to take off your mask himself. He'd taken a piece of you back then and fled with it, and you hadn't noticed until you'd lain in bed that night, a hand cupped over your breast. A ship — a train wheezing past pastures and villages and city outskirts — a bulletproof coat slung around broad shoulders; your coat; you'd given it to him to keep him safe during the mission and wound up forgetting to ask for it on the ride back — a fountain beside you, papers before you, a promise in front of your hands, waiting to be picked up — I WILL CATCH HIM, WHATEVER IT TAKES — and you had slipped it

into your pocket the way Sherlock had done the same to you on the Noahitic. Fair's fair. All was fair in love and war. What goes around, comes around.

He takes the cigarette between index and middle finger. Blows out a cloud of smoke. You smile through the grey mist and ashen scent. It smelled like him, so it wasn't difficult to.

You had needed him because he'd been Sherlock Holmes. He would never stop being Sherlock Holmes. You adore him for it.

I hope you're aware that I admire you, Detective.

A smile. You are undone.

As do I, Professor.