

Home is where the heart is, but hearts change

by mazaher

March 19, 2013

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Sherlock

*Everybody knows that the dice are loaded
Everybody rolls with their fingers crossed
Everybody knows that the war is over
Everybody knows the good guys lost*

He already knew, before falling. In a way, he'd always known. Early treasons cannot be deleted.

How old had he been? four? three and a half? Raw and confused, he had burst out from the bubble of well-meaning lies people choose to believe every day of their miserable lives. He'd chosen to live the fairytale instead. Blood, gore, black magic and all.

Now he's won his game, although the dice were loaded against him from the beginning. His war is over. But as he sets eyes on John Watson after three years, as he watches unseen while he's placing his bet at the Tote behind the grandstand, he realises that the good guy has lost.

*Everybody knows the fight was fixed
The poor stay poor, the rich get rich
That's how it goes
Everybody knows*

When he fell, Sherlock believed that he would make a difference. That all this (dying, living on, leaving a lie behind) would have been worth the while, if only he could kill the monster.

Now he's killed it, each filthy head, and burned the stumps, and the truth is there for him to see: it doesn't make all that difference. It didn't change the world and how it goes.

It only crushed the best handful of people Sherlock ever knew.

*Everybody knows that the boat is sinking
Everybody knows that the captain lied
Everybody got this broken feeling
Like their mummy or their dog just died*

John

*The ponies run, the girls are young,
The odds are there to beat.
You win a while, and then it's done –
Your little winning streak.*

They say that those who are unlucky in love are lucky in gambling. John H. Watson is determined to test the saying in depth. Twice a week he takes the train at Waterloo and goes betting at Kempton Park. He's never been fond of betting rooms: he wants to be there and watch the horses, their effort, their falls. He wants to see falls he could foresee. Falls most horses survive.

He bets at the Tote, always at the Tote: bookies may remember him, at the very time when he tries to forget himself. He spends half his pension gambling, always losing a little bit more than he wins. He's not so set on winning after all.

*And summoned now to deal
With your invincible defeat,
You live your life as if it's real,
A Thousand Kisses Deep.*

What he feels these days is almost nothing. There is a shell left for him to live in, but the shell is empty, like a snail's after a glowworm ate it. Or like those tall fronts of the buildings on the main street in western movies, covering rough low sheds behind.

He's keeping up appearances, because what's the use in bothering people with something that can't be fixed?

But of his life, there isn't anything left.

*I'm turning tricks, I'm getting fixed,
I'm back on B(aker) Street.
You lose your grip, and then you slip
Into the Masterpiece.*

The boat is sinking, and Mycroft lied. For the whole of Sherlock's lonely fight he kept talking about when he'd return, how things would slip back to what they'd been, perhaps even better, if only Sherlock would...

Now Sherlock has seen (and cannot delete) that nothing ever slips back to what it'd been.

*Everybody talking to their pockets
Everybody wants a box of chocolates
And a long stem rose
Everybody knows*

Sherlock learned at eight in third year that a rose is not an extra, a free gift of beauty from a benevolent Creator, but rather something of a brothel advertisement.

There is not much to hope for from a brothel advertisement: not even a fair deal, usually. Yet hope he did. The myth of apokatastasis, all the stronger when unacknowledged.

But it is only in moving .gifs that a falling body can fly back up to the roof ledge which it left at 9,8 m/sec.

*Everybody knows that you love me baby
Everybody knows that you really do
Everybody knows that you've been faithful
Ah give or take a night or two*

From what Sherlock has gathered, it seems that John's marriage had taken everybody by surprise. But none of the few people from *before*, whom John still was seeing, begrudged him this respite from the grief etched on his face.

Mary had been smart, brave, and as gentle as she was fierce. When she was well enough, she could drink the guys under the table, have them laughing to burst their sides, and beat them at darts any night of the week. She fit in without changing herself for them.

John is back on Baker Street.

It was Mrs. Hudson who brought him back after Mary died. It was not healthy for him to live alone, she said. He needed someone to take care of him, she said.

John heard what she never said, that she needed him as much. Together, they manage to keep their grip on life, day in day out. A false life: Moriarty's posthumous masterpiece.

*And maybe I had miles to drive,
And promises to keep:
You ditch it all to stay alive,
A Thousand Kisses Deep.*

John had never thought he could love again.

He knew there was a real possibility that without love he couldn't survive. He'd almost died once already, he knew the feeling.

Looking back, he saw that his time with Sherlock, after Afghanistan, had been borrowed time. But it was all fine, perhaps it was right that he died for good already.

Then Mary Wiggins, shivering with fever, had knocked at The Doctor Hickey Surgery in Arneway Street one chilly evening in November. The first thing she'd said had been *I'm sorry for your loss*. She'd said *I was fond of him too*.

They'd kept in contact. She seemed to always know what to say and when to say it. They missed him together. It was enough.

John decided *What the hell, this is real, whatever it is, for however long it may last. Can't be wasted*.

They'd married in March.

*And sometimes when the night is slow,
The wretched and the meek,
We gather up our hearts and go,
A Thousand Kisses Deep.*

They made love like healing, knowing neither would be healed.

*Everybody knows that it's now or never
Everybody knows that it's me or you
And everybody knows that you live forever
Ah when you've done a line or two*

But Mary is no more, and Sherlock must choose whether to remain dead or be resurrected; a book already sold out and forgotten, or a new story to be written. He still knows he's not a hero, nor an angel, and perhaps not even a genius, given all the obvious things he seems to have overlooked. He also knows (now, *now* he knows) how high is the danger lurking in the eyes of others.

*Everybody knows that you're in trouble
Everybody knows what you have been through
Take one last look at this sacred heart
Before it blows
And everybody knows*

What's left to know?
That he has a heart.
That John is wound deep within its fibers.
That there had been a choice once, and that it was irrevocably made.
That nothing which has happened, or could ever happen after, is going to change the past.
That only the future can be changed, and only for himself and one other person.
Sherlock climbs the steps to 221B and rings the doorbell.

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LEONARD COHEN, SHARON ROBINSON, *Everybody knows* (1988) at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEQldSi-heE>
Cover from CONCRETE BLONDE (1990) at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9GVk3AcIEM>

*I made it to the forward deck.
I blessed our remnant fleet –
And then consented to be wrecked,
A Thousand Kisses Deep.*

Mary had been back in hospital in June. By early July she'd been dead, her stash of emergency BZD untouched under her pillow. Now John is back on Baker Street. He's left his job. He gambles. Watches telly with Martha. On Saturday nights, he drinks one pint or two too much at the pub, unless Lestrade is there to send him home. He hasn't written a line in three years.

*And quiet is the thought of you,
The file on you complete,
Except what we forgot to do,
A Thousand Kisses Deep.*

John doesn't write because if he did, then the story would really be finished. He isn't ready for that. He has learned too late how much damage --unwanted, unplanned, devastating-- his writing has done. Like semtex his writing had been in Moriarty's hands, exploding Sherlock's image after John himself had built it. Now there it lies scattered in fragments, and John can't pick them up and glue them together, because everybody would know what was never on the file. What they forgot to do, until it was too late. John doesn't want them to know. It is the only thing he's left. Until, one late afternoon, the doorbell rings.

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LEONARD COHEN, *A Thousand Kisses Deep* (1998) at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaJAxGeZ4E>
Resurrection, moving .gif by sherlockspeare, at:
<http://sherlockspeare.tumblr.com>