

## **Crossroads of fate in North London**

by mazaher

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*AU: one sequence of events by which The Pool Incident in The Great Game could have been prevented. Note that I am quite skeptical about the actual existence of alternate realities (one of them is more than enough imo), but the idea makes for interesting speculation. Also: waterfalls, the Thames, swimming pools, the Aquatic Centre... it seems Moriarty --any version of him-- has quite a thing for water. Now slightly enlarged.*

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I am the seventeenth victim.

Correction: I was.

Now I am nobody.

I am dead.

I suspect this residual feeling of self-identity will soon be revealed as temporary.

While it lasts, it gives me a welcome feeling of contentment.

It seems being dead is a severely underrated state.

In fact, I am more than content. I am pleased with myself.

The bloke --Jim Moriarty, he said his name was-- didn't expect my reaction.

The men who abducted me out of the Bow and Arrow yesterday night (was it yesterday...? Death does make a mess of the sense of time) had driven me from Walworth all the way to Brompton and beyond, to the building site of the Aquatic Centre in the Olympic Park. He was waiting for us, and supervised while they loaded me with explosive, silent and exactly precise as they worked on my body. His skin milky white under the orange light of the safety lamp. His hair and carefully neglected stubble blue-black. His lips red and thin. Self-assured. Cheerful as he gave me his instructions: how they would take me to Victoria Station, how I would make a call with my cell-phone and repeat the words he would feed me through the other phone he gave me. How the semtex vest would explode if I made a mistake --any mistake.

It's funny how things take a different perspective when you are an inch from death.

How crystal-clear the realization that even if you die of old age at 107, your affairs properly settled, all the same dying is going to leave behind a bunch of loose threads which you will not have a chance to weave in.

The bread machine beeping its end-of-cycle alarm. Water running from the tap, spraying the already drenched lawn in a spiral pattern from the rotating nozzle. An unironed shirt on top of the washing machine. Mail in the box which you will never read, spam in your inbox which nobody will ever delete. The telephone bill to pay. The lightbulb you never got around to replacing.

How little it all really matters. When or where. At what age, and how.

Then I smiled at him.

I grabbed a wire and tore it out.

We all died instantly in the explosion. No-one else was harmed, although it's a good thing that the construction works were making good time: there's a lot to rebuild.

I don't know why they are not here, Moriarty and his men, whatever this provisional timeplace may be.

I only know I (or what remained of me) saw scrapes of something black and ragged flutter and fall to the ground after the blast.

I heard what sounded like his voice melting away in a blurred whisper of words, washed away by the blast: "I'll burn... \*the heart\*... out of you."

I got a glimpse of something like two twin flames, one red and bright like a wood fire, the other thin and tense and blue like the burn of a gas welder, smitten at the same time by a slap of strong wind. Almost extinguished, but then they straightened themselves and burned on. And I remember, even now that I feel myself dissolving I remember, the look on Moriarty's face when he realized...  
I had surprised him.

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