

## 261 words to say goodbye

by mazaher

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I can't get rid of a nagging suspect that something like this was going through Gatiss+Moffat+Thompson's collective mind while working on *The Reichenbach Fall*. My apologies to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who wrote the words in *The Final Problem* (1893). I merely tweaked them viciously in a few key points.

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My dear Moran,

I write these few lines as I am waiting for Mr. Holmes, whom I am meeting on this rooftop for the final discussion of those questions which lie between us. I have been given a sketch of the methods by which he aided the English police and kept himself informed of our movements. They certainly confirm the very high opinion which I had formed of his abilities. I am pleased to think that I shall be able to free our hands from any further effects of his presence, though I fear that it is at a cost which will give pain to my friends, and especially, my dear Moran, to you. I have already explained to you, however, that my career had in any case reached its crisis, and that no possible conclusion to it could be more congenial to me than this. Indeed, if I may make a full confession to you, I have been for a while quite determined to prevent its apex from being touched by decay, and I allowed you to depart on that shooting errand under the persuasion that some development of this sort would follow. Tell Inspector Patterson that the papers which he needs to support the accusations against Holmes are in pigeonhole H., done up in a blue envelope and inscribed 'Holmes.' I made every disposition of my property long before climbing these stairs, and handed it to my brother James. Pray give my greetings to Mrs. Adler, and believe me to be, my dear fellow,

Very sincerely yours,

Jim Moriarty

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*Note:* Sir Arthur Conan Doyle left behind a few unsolved mysteries, one of them being first names in the Moriarty family. In *The Final Problem*, Watson mentions Professor Moriarty's brother, James by name, who is said in *The Valley of Fear* to be a station master in the West of England. In *The Adventure of the Empty House*, Professor Moriarty's first name is stated as being also James.

The conundrum may perhaps be solved by making reference to a similar habit of some patrician families in modern-age Venice, where all male offspring was given the same first name in order for it to be surely passed on along the generations. Each son also received a second personal name, used in daily life. In official documents, the brothers were distinguished by numerals (e.g. Alvise Mocenigo III is not the grandson of the family patriarch, but the third son in the current generation).