

Nostos

by mazaher

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*Mastica e sputa
da una parte il miele
mastica e sputa
dall'altra la cera
mastica e sputa
prima che venga neve*

Munch and spit out
honey on one side
munch and spit out
wax on the other
munch and spit out
before snow comes.

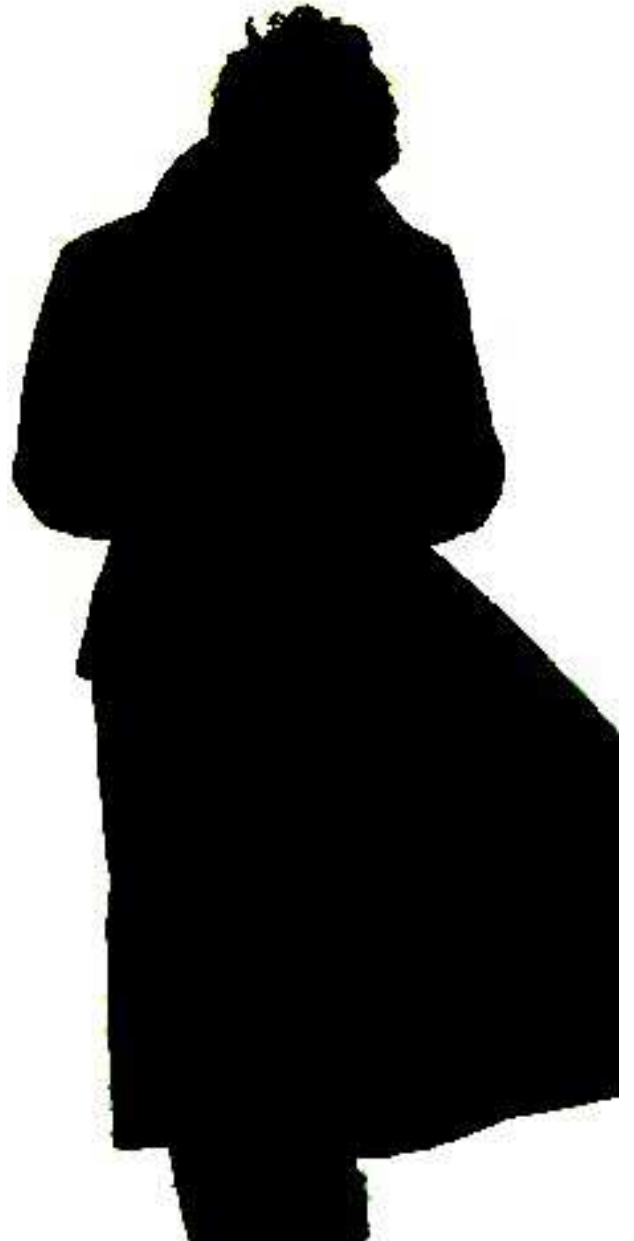
There is a stark purity under Sherlock's arrogance.
As much as he strives to pick out, analyse and memorise
people's motivations (what they do, what they do not, what
they want to do and what they'd never dare) he just can't get it
that there are people, like Moriarty, who do evil merely
because they can-- like someone may want to climb a
mountain merely because it's there.
Even if they die in the process.

As long as he knew there would still be time, he could risk
making mistakes. He trusted himself enough to believe that he
could always find a rational way to patch them up later.
Even when he went too far with his experiments at Baskerville
(the hound, the sugar) he managed to settle things somehow,
afterwards.

But when he'd been cornered on a rooftop, and there was no
more time, and there was no-one to talk to anymore, because
Moriarty has shot himself in the head, then--
he knew he couldn't afford a mistake.

He chose to jump to his death for something completely
irrational, something he never even believed in, something
contrary to everything that had ever worked for him and kept
him safe (Mycroft is always right).
He jumped because he **cared**.

Rather to his surprise, he's found that in these post-modern
times, when values are relative and ethics individual, he does
have values and an ethics of his own. He's ready to die for
either or both, even as he's unsure whether
he trusts them.



*Luce luce lontana
più bassa delle stelle
quale sarà la mano
che ti accende e ti spegne*

Light, light from afar
lower than starlight
may it be the same hand
that kindles and snuffs out?

Mycroft had been wrong.
John didn't miss the battlefield:
he missed the teamwork.

There is a perfection in working smoothly together,
be it to take lives or save them.
A physical pleasure in acting out one's competence,
knowing
it's matched by the others',
and that each looks out for each.

His body had been warped by his wound,
his mind stopped short, his heart crashed,
a racehorse breaking down mid-stride.
He came back neither a doctor nor a soldier.

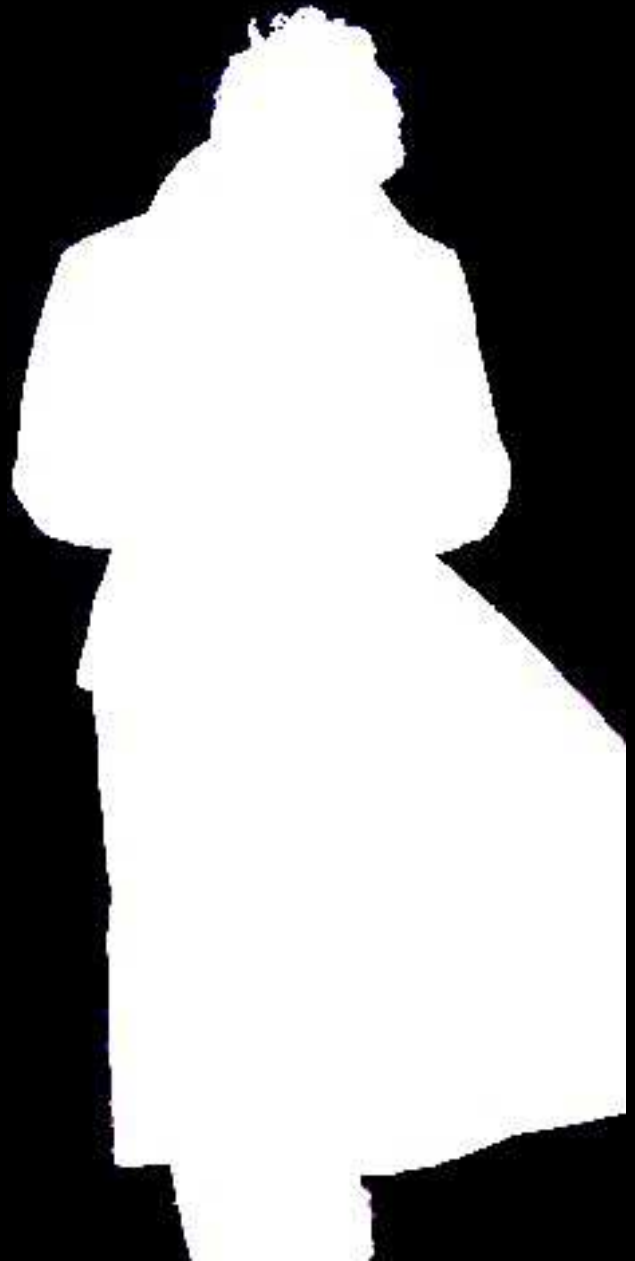
Ten minutes after stepping into his new flat
with his new flatmate,
he'd been a doctor again.
A few hours more, he was again a soldier,
snuffing out a life to save another.

He'd found his team of two.
Yet Sherlock didn't seem aware.

Friend, colleague...

Friends between them, *colleagues* in public.

Two different sorts of relationships, neither of which
Sherlock had ever considered entering.
Much less the two of them at the same time.



*Ho visto Nina volare
tra le corde dell'altalena
un giorno la prenderò
come fa il vento alla schiena*

I've seen Nina flying
between the ropes of the swing
one day I'll take her
like wind on one's back

Sherlock used to strive for perfection in order
to keep others at bay.

Since he fell, he's had to be faultless just to stay alive,
hunter and prey at the same time.

Between the two, there had been *John*, and the aching
pleasure of being perfect for the sake of another.

Now that he can come back, he wonders how he ever managed
to breathe, without.

The best trick had been just turning up after all.
Sherlock had waited a moment
(23 minutes, eight seconds)
composing himself under the awning of Speedy's,
his back to the window, coat collar turned up, chin down,
staring at the steady downpour
dampening him on rebound from the pavement.
Then he had stepped out in the rain,
and rung the doorbell.
He wouldn't pick the lock. It was John's house now.

He had books under his arm and in his pockets:
Cultus arborum and the rest of the *Phallic series*,
written anonymously by Hargrave Jennings,
privately printed in London, 1889-90,
signed by the author, bound in Moroccan leather,
and inscribed to one Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

He had meant to present himself as a
door-to-door seller of rare pornographic books.
The planned barracks joke fled from his mind as soon as
he heard John's tired voice on the entryphone.

"Hello?" John had said.
Then, alarmed, "Who's there?" when Sherlock
had found that for some reason
he couldn't speak.
"Please, let me in,"
he's begged finally, an edge of panic creeping in
that perhaps John wouldn't.
"What...?!"

A buzz. Darkness beyond the doorway.



*Stanotte è venuta l'ombra
l'ombra che mi fa il verso
le ho mostrato il coltello
e la mia maschera di gelso*

This night the shadow's come
the shadow mocking me
I've shown him my knife
and my mask of mulberry

Creaky steps.
Lowered eyes.
"I think I've got fleas."
"I don't care a damn for fleas."

The first thing they do
--after staring in silence, after
embracing like the world is ending--
is having tea.

Gunpowder and lime-tree honey on toast,
the food of the gods on the inner side of the world
and the food of the living on the outer.
The only sounds their breathing, the clink of a spoon,
the hushed work of teeth on sweet morsels.

"At times, I dreamed that you were alive.
At times, I had nightmares that you wouldn't want
to come back. Why should you?"
"No, I... Yes. I thought about it. Not coming back."
"So, why are you here?"
"Because I found I didn't care for surviving.
I wanted to live. Life is here. You."

"Tell me."

Sherlock tells how he had to set himself a venous catheter
once (knifed in the chest, loss of blood, dehydration;
Mycroft sending him the stuff he needed, but not a nurse;
he was hiding)

John takes his hand as he speaks, covers the palm
with small gentle kisses-- comfort for the both of them.



*Luce luce lontana
che si accende e si spegne
quale sarà la mano
che illumina le stelle*

Light, light from afar
kindled and snuffed out
which hand is it
that lights up the stars?

Sherlock is learning.

The first thing he learns, is that he's been already learning from John since the very first moment.

He's learning Timing; he's learning Appropriateness, that his naked joy at a challenge doesn't mix with the naked fear of the parents of a kidnapped child; he's learning Collaboration; he's even learning the most difficult lesson of Apologies.

It's terrifying.

The pieces of his long-shattered humanity have been picked up and gathered one by one since John came. Now they're being painstakingly, precisely put together again. He doesn't know who he will be when the work will be done. The prospect of a possible loss of competence in the tricks that protected him until then, chills his spine and robs him of speech.

If not for John, he wouldn't know how to let go of:

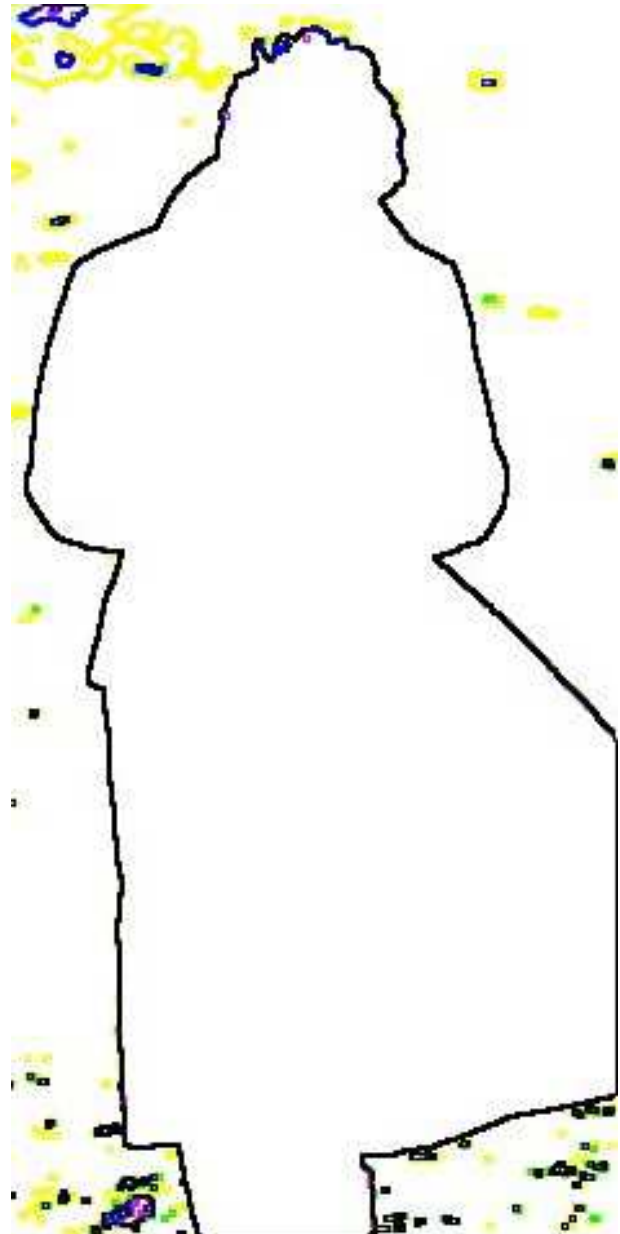
- scaring or angering people away: "shut up, you lower the IQ of the whole street";
 - talking over them: "Seven are married and two are having an affair – with each other, it would seem";
 - shocking them into giving him what he wants: "What are you: an idiot, a drunk or a criminal?";
 - avoiding attachment: "they all *care* so much".
- (Alone didn't protect him after all.)

But there is one thing that Sherlock has learned all by himself, on a rooftop under a sky of wind and clouds: that as much as hard work and careful planning can give shape to a life, often it is the unplanned, the unforeseen, the unforeseeable that fills up the most of it.

As he stepped on the eaves and opened his arms, half a second before jumping to his (planned, foreseen, foreseeable) death, the one last memory Sherlock found in his mind was the slant of sunlight from the window on a Sunday morning in May, slashing the carpet in obliques of light and shadow and warming John's naked feet as he read his newspaper after breakfast.

He had felt the need to kneel and kiss those feet. He had dismissed it as irrelevant at the time. Maybe another day...
Now he knows better.

There had not been another day, not for three years.
Now Sherlock knows how to stop, and pay attention.
It is these things that nourish his heart.



*Mastica e sputa
prima che venga neve*

Munch and spit out
before snow comes.

Now John's warm hand on his shoulder as they sleep together is curing him of insomnia. It is this *strange and abundant love* that keeps him safe.

It's curious how the space in 221B seems to have doubled now that again there are two bodies sharing it.

*If you go to thinking, take your heart with you.
If you go to love, take your head with you.
Love is empty without thinking,
thinking hollow without love.*

C.G. JUNG, *The Red Book* (Liber Novus)

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Music: and lyrics: FABRIZIO DE ANDRÉ, *Ho visto Nina volare* (*Anime salve*, 1996) at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ma0PAQXat6E>

French translation of lyrics: <http://lyricstranslate.com/en/ho-visto-nina-volare-jai-vu-nina-voler.html>

A strange and abundant love, by aceofhearts61, at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/252340/>. One of the best ever. No reference beyond the title to the plot of this story.

