

Of bees, and needles, and scalpels, and ghosts

by mazaher

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Set immediately after Season One, *The Great Game*.

Contents:

Heavy-duty character death, complete with gory details. Inappropriate grieving behaviour. Possible implied necrophilia. Use of restricted substances, both planned and actual. Questionable use of kitchen space. Unreliable Brit-picking. Unbetaed. No happy ending.

Repeat: no happy ending. You have been warned.

Regrettably, this is not merely a songfic (which would by itself be a bit not good anyway) but a *double* songfic, the songs being:

STING, *Soul cake* (2009), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bu8H5rA9HuA> -- Sherlock

THE PRODIGALS, *Whiskey asylum* (2008), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5D8PffmgFk> -- John.

To make matters worse, I borrowed from the ST:TOS fandom the concept of ni-var, a form of literary composition in which two separate voices give words to the experience of a certain event.

"Someone once said": irisbleufic+moony, in *Lay Me Down*, at <http://moony.livejournal.com/1623596.html>, sequel to *The Shape I Found You In*, at <http://irisbleufic.livejournal.com/243305.html>. Read them, they're beautiful.

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Cast a cold eye
On life, on death.
Horseman, pass by!

W.B. YEATS, *Under Ben Bulbin* (1939)

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Sherlock

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John is dead.

*A soul cake, a soul cake,
Please, good missus, a soul cake.
An apple, a pear, a plum or a cherry,
Any good thing to make us all merry,*

John is dead.

The explosion carved him into pieces, a messy puzzle of separated body parts.

I felt the need to pick them up-- his left hand, for instance, severed rather neatly at the wrist, almost all the lunate and the tip of the scaphoid showing glistening and white, a couple of tendons dangling in shreds of indigo. Dark blood dripping.

I stopped myself. It would have probably looked more than a bit not good. I didn't want to risk doing anything that may have upset him. All the bits and pieces of him, strewn around amid the rubbish, seemed rather upset already.

*A soul cake, a soul cake,
Please, good missus, a soul cake.
One for Peter, two for Paul,
And three for Him that made us all.*

But now that John, the whole of John (except for the blood and the other bodily fluids that leaked out) has been gathered up, sewn back together somehow, and tidily set into a coffin like a set of clean socks in a drawer, what do I have left to help me make the transition from John-here and John-nevermore?

Not even his hand to keep in the fridge, to hold between mine, to watch and kiss and. And.

God bless the master of this house

John

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Sherlock is dead.

*There's shade from the sun there's warmth in the cold,
relief from your sorrow there's someone to hold,
it's the ship in the bottle when I'm growing old,
sailing to whiskey asylum.*

Sherlock is dead and I never told him that I loved him.

I can recall each and every time I was on the brink of saying the words, or of turning to him and clapping a hand on his arm and slowing him down and bloody kissing him, and I never made it in time.

He was always too fast for me.

*If I once had a dream and I let it slip by
the anodyne cream takes the tears from your eye
whatever may haunt me, the riders pass by
when I'm snug in my whiskey asylum.*

Sherlock is dead and I'm quickly becoming an addict.

I tried cocaine first. I wanted to feel what he felt, now that I can't even dream of questioning him anymore.

Better still, I wanted to see if I could make myself fast enough to keep his pace, follow him, and ask him.

Do you love me like I do?

But no such luck.

Cocaine is too sharp. It's like knives in my head, even at a bare four per cent. Knives and scalpels, and everything is cut into pieces, neat tiny bits so precisely cut that they don't even bleed. Yet.

Then the moment comes when they do.

I try to put them all back together but I can't remember my anatomy or my topography or my home address or my very

*And the mistress also
And all the little children
That round your table grow;
The cattle in your stable,
The dogs at your front door,
And all that dwell within your gates
We wish you ten times more.*

I have no idea why he died and I didn't. What wish or blessing on his part went wrong (very). We were so sure we'd both go. Yet here I am, and he's not, and this is a mystery I can't unravel. I crave a shot like I don't remember ever longing for one. I carry a syringe, a needle and a dose in my left coat pocket at all times, like a terminal patient might keep a lethal stash of opiates under his pillow. Just in case. I touch it, fondle it, slide my fingertips along the smooth barrel, thin, cool under its plastic wrap; I feel the round hollow at the heel of the needle; I curl my hand around the cooler glass of the bottle. Seven per cent. No, nine. I know Lestrade knows. I see him watching me. Worried. Sad. But I don't
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because
I don't want to forget.
It would hurt more.

*Go down into the cellar
And see what you can find;
If the barrels are not empty
We hope that you'll be kind;
We hope that you'll be kind
With your apple and your pear,
And we'll come no more a-soulin'
Till Christmas time next year.*

It should be easy enough, going back to how things were before. I lived alone for so long, and with him only for a few months-- mere days over three months, in fact.

name. The only thing I see is blood, *his* blood, on my hands and my chest and my face. When I get to the point that I feel the slick bits of his exploded brain under my fingertips as my ears are ringing after the explosion and I try to wipe my eyes enough to see what's happened to Sherlock, that is the moment when I scream. Mrs. Hudson is upset, hearing me scream. Cocaine+I appears to be a rather bad combination for public peace.

*And under Ben Bulben on top of the heap
on the path in between where I started to creep
the road of the righteous was thorny and steep
and I sank to the ground and I drifted to sleep.*

So I shifted to morphine; being a doctor gives one so many easy choices. Morphine is softer. Slower. Just right for me. I sit down comfortably in a corner of my mind. I watch Sherlock walk away, smaller and smaller in the distance, and I wait for him to go all the way around the solar system at the damnedest pace of those long legs of his, until... Until he comes back here from the other side. To me. I curl around my memories and wait until things begin to make sense.

*There's shade from the sun there's warmth in the cold,
relief from your sorrow there's someone to hold,
it's the ship in the bottle when I'm growing old,
sailing to whiskey asylum.*

I used to have a life. Then the war changed everything. Then Sherlock happened, and he changed everything again. He didn't turn things back. He turned them around for the better, in a new way I'd never imagined possible. This is his lasting legacy to me. I hold on to it. I cherish it. I polish it with morphine and press it to my heart to keep it

But I can't. I can't. He changed everything, and I didn't even realise.

Now, alone is lonely.

*The streets are very dirty,
My shoes are very thin,
I have a little pocket
To put a penny in;
If you haven't got a penny
A ha'penny will do,
If you haven't got a ha'penny
Then God bless you.*

There is this haunting tune I can't get out of my head, about the souls of the dead knocking on doors before Christmas and begging for alms.

The cold, the hunger, the helplessness.

Pathetic.

I imagine John at the head of a small patrol of ghosts. Knocking, asking. For them, for himself. Needing to beg. His chin held resolutely high, because being dead is nothing to be ashamed of. The thought is intolerable.

*A soul cake, a soul cake,
Please, good missus, a soul cake.
An apple, a pear, a plum or a cherry,
Any good thing to make us all merry,*

I am not sleeping, I don't know since when.

I pick up the violin. I play something I don't recognize, trying to flush this ghost song from my brain and failing.

After the first four hours, I can't even hear what I'm playing anymore.

After six hours and thirty-three minutes, the fourth string snaps.

I feel my heart crack and shatter like glass at that shrill last note.

I had never even been sure I had one, and now it's broken.

But I'm not going to throw it away. If I can't keep one single piece of John, I'll keep all the pieces of my heart instead, because the last

warm.

It keeps *me* warm.

I never owned anything so good. So precious.

Mine.

*Do you laugh as you pass, do you just hurry by,
do you kindly stoop down with that look in your eye,
do you know that it's you just as much as it's I
that's a dream in this whiskey asylum.*

Mrs. Hudson comes in with tea and muffins. She's poured melted butter on them, she says. She wants me to drink a cup, eat a muffin.

No.

NO.

Tea and muffins, they're not Sherlock.

My life from now on an endless chain of negations.

*But I wish you could hear and I wish I could say
the thought that still runs through my head on this day,
is a love that has vanished just hidden away
could I fall to my knee, could I search, could I pray.*

Sometimes, while I wait, I can make myself believe that I told him. Or that he told me. That the hidden love was revealed, like a mystery solved, one that wasn't dull and that wasn't boring.

Then I remember. We were both idiots.

I get another shot, and I feel fine again.

I can wait, for as long as it takes.

*There's shade from the sun there's warmth in the cold,
relief from your sorrow there's someone to hold,
it's the ship in the bottle when I'm growing old,
sailing to whiskey asylum.*

People come and look at me in commiseration. They talk to me about help being available. Quitting. Rehabilitation.

They don't know. They can't understand that I already have all

thing that it held was him.
John asleep, curled into a ball, one hand to cover his mouth. John
shaving and humming. John annoyed at the bots' eggs jar on the
kitchen counter. Or perhaps at the horse intestines to go with them.
John looking up at me.
Nobody ever looked up at me like John.
And I never told him I loved him.
But he knew.
He was not an idiot.

*A soul cake, a soul cake,
Please, good missus, a soul cake.
One for Peter, two for Paul,
And three for Him that made us all.*

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the help I can have, and that's all the help I'll ever need.
This is my ship in the bottle. My hive of honey bees.
Someone once said Sherlock's mind was a wasp's nest.
They were wrong: it was a hive, sunlight distilled into sunbright
honey.
What if bees sting? The honey makes it worth the pain, and so
it is.
It was worth all the pain.
Even if we never spoke the words.
But he knew.
He was not an idiot.

*It's the hope in the bottle as I'm growing old,
reeling in this whiskey asylum.*

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