

The huntsman

by mazaher

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*Don't ask me what *this* has come from. I don't want to know (or remember).*

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James Moriarty, MPhys, keeps a coffin in his bedroom.

Every morning he steps carefully inside, fully clothed, the soles of his shoes wrapped in disposable covers like those used at crime scenes, so as not to soil the pale pink silk lining. He lays there for perhaps ten minutes, pressing his back straight and flat on the bottom mat, stretching so that his head, his feet, his shoulders meet the soft but solid sides. Completely contained within an ordered, symmetrical space all of his own.

Then he sits up, stands up, steps out, and walks through the door toward whatever his day is holding in store.

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There is much he doesn't remember from his childhood. Whole years seem to have been sucked into the void, events, people, memories and all.

He does remember a time when he used to pick up objects he found scattered about the house, and wondered what they were and how they had ended up among his things:

photographs, books, DVDs, a skipping rope, a pearl earring with a touch of dried blood on the gold clip, a Breyer model of a Shire mare with a broken leg, its tail melted into a shapeless lump, and once an external HD, three-quarters full with files.

He used to stare, uncomprehending, confused. Uneasy.

In the end, he began to throw away everything he didn't recognize or use. After all, one never forgets the really important things, now does one?

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He has noticed that nobody seem to know him. He has no family, no friends, schoolmates, university mates.

His degree diploma hangs in a simple frame just inside the door of his flat. It is his name written there, his birth date; it is his. But he doesn't recall the day when he got it, although he does remember his astrophysics quite well (and a lot of other things beside).

He has concluded that it's for the better: he has no idea what he could even **say** to family or friends anyway. He lives alone. He has ways and means of his own to have sex whenever he likes. No need to pay for it with anything more than a modicum of his time.

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For a while when he was younger, he was obsessed with death. This he remembers well.

Waking up in darkness at three in the morning, empty space pressing all around until he couldn't breathe, the only escape wrapping himself in the covers like a cocoon and hanging by the side of the bed, precariously held up by the flap of the sheet pressed between mattress and frame on the other side: neither up on the bed nor down on the floor, suspended between heaven and earth, invisible and unreachable by whatever demons were at his heels.

He didn't want to know which ones.

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Later, he manages to rationalise. He must have had a family at some point; they must have died. He looks around, and --now that he pays attention-- dying seems to just be something that people **do** all the time. The most normal occurrence. Not everybody gets to go to work in the morning, eat pizza, buy eau-de-cologne, watch *The Office* on the telly. But all die at some point.

The thought of his own mortality doesn't trouble him in the least.

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After the fourth murder, he finds that he doesn't need to slip halfway off the bed anymore in order to fend off the stifling darkness. Being in control of someone else's death seems to have brought the demons to his own side. He sprawls across the mattress, and sleeps soundly until morning.

Then he wakes up, goes out and buys the coffin.

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It is now five years since he's launched on his career as a consulting criminal.

He rarely takes part in his plans himself: mostly because he doesn't need it.

But sometimes he will be there for the kill after the chase; sometimes he needs to feel a neck in his hands (the soft crush of a windpipe), or the butter-soft push of a blade between ribs, or the sharp, neat sound of a gunshot.

Just to be reminded that it is he who chooses: who dies, when and how.

Just to be reminded that: He. Is. In control.

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He doesn't feel lonely, but he does feel wanting.

In utero, he reflects, the world is a boundary. Impersonal, just *there*, like the sides of his coffin when he's laying in it. Then one is born out of the womb, and soon discovers that the comfortable boundary, limiting but certain and safe, is in fact a person: Mother, God.

A person with whom one is not at all guaranteed to find oneself in agreement.

Uncomfortable, uncertain, unknowable, and ultimately unsafe.

He read once that "...God is the quarry, the Intelligences are the huntsmen."

He knows himself as a huntsman; he knows that there must be other huntsmen somewhere in the thick of the forest, intent on the same hunt, but no one of the clumsy, noisy, bothersome humans who infest London, Britain, and the world, seems to be aware that their unending, mindless bustle only flushes the Quarry deeper into the wood.

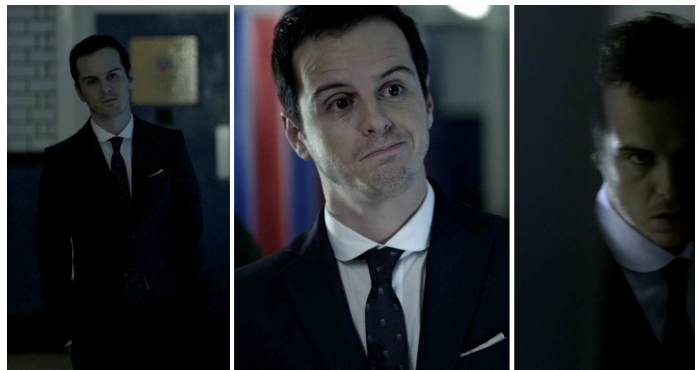
Then he finds Sherlock.

Finally, someone who sees people and things like Jim does; who sees people and things as they are. Who knows what the hunt is all about. Who can read spoor and lay a trap. Who knows that the bait for the Quarry are human lives. Other people's, and their own. Their own burned out hearts. The Quarry is greedy for the smell of holocausts.

Together, they can succeed.

Together, they can catch God.

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Note: The quote is from CLIVE STAPLES LEWIS, *Imagination and thought in the Middle Ages*, in *Id.*, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966, 1998, p. 51.