

## **Sleeping in the morning**

by mazaher

March 19th, 2011

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Set at some point before *Catharsis*. From watching/listening to silent dialogue, from "he" to "you". *Getting to know you. I.*

As usual, Jack written in Courier New, Patrick written in Verdana.

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### **1. Jack**

He's sleeping.

We made love, then we fell asleep. I before him: the last thing I remember are his eyes staring at me, half in affection, half in surprise.

I was exhausted and aching: when he takes the leading role in our lovemaking, he tends to forget that human bodies have limits, and mine are a bit narrower than his. I sleepily made a mental list of little things to tend to in the morning, in the privacy of the bathroom. But I felt so good. He always makes me feel so good.

It is not just the reality of my body he disregards; he also forgets his own. I often think that's why he risks so much. When he gets hurt or --as I suspect he occasionally does-- when he hurts himself on purpose, he's trying to match the pain he feels inside with the pain in his body. A pain he can in some measure control.

I fell asleep before him, and now I'm the first to wake up.

Propped on my elbow, back to the headboard, I watch him.

I feel like I'm stealing from him, watching him as I am doing now, watching his body just \*live\*. But if I am indeed stealing, my prize is something he doesn't care about.

I do.

Until a moment ago, his face was smooth and serene, like that of a child. He never looks quite like that when he's awake. But now the slightest frown is ruffling his brow, creasing minutely the skin at the root of his nose. His breathing picks up for a moment, then steadies again in an easy rhythm.

Whatever bad dream touched him for a moment, it's gone.

After we parted, he to travel abroad, I to Medical School, Patrick remained the hinge on which my days turned. Unvoiced, unacknowledged: I don't believe I even did as much as say his name aloud for all those years. Neither did I utter it in my mind, my beloved. The image of you was enough, and it never left me.

I'd wake up in the morning with the scent of you in my nose. I'd order a meal, and remember what you'd have for lunch. At the theatre, watching the latest comedy by Wilde, I'd turn about to comment... and you weren't there.

What a shame. You'd have loved "Ernest".

I studied, I learned. I've become acquainted with the inner workings of the body. I have tried to explore the darker mystery of the mind. I know now how to heal sicknesses and wounds, but I can't heal the sickness of my own heart, and I can't heal your wounded soul. I see it bleeding, even in the quiet of sleep, and...

Support care. The last resort for the physician when nothing else works. The hope that nature, and the body, will do what science and art cannot.

Sometimes the thin twin scars at the tip of my collarbone still itch.

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## 2. Patrick

He believes I'm asleep.

I woke up when he entered my dreams. They were formless, mildly disquieting, and then he was there. Things became real, got substance. I felt the ground become solid under my feet, an up and a down define themselves, light and darkness separate, as though in a renewed act of creation.

He does that. He makes my world anew, every time it seems to irreparably splinter in fragments. He raises his hand, calls them back, keeps them poised in mid-air-- then he snaps his fingers, or slaps me, or invites me inside his tough strong body of earth and flowers, and a whole cosmos is born again from the chaos of my mind.

Now I listen to him watching me.

His breath slightly changes its cadence, and I frown. I carefully smooth out my own breathing, compose again my face as if a nightmare had peered up from the edge of my sleeping mind but had thought better and left me alone. I feel him relaxing.

I can only guess at how much he missed me. I know for sure how I missed him, during those few, too long years when he was studying as a physician and I traveled abroad. I believed myself free, but I was not, because I had not yet learned how to think like a free man.

This is the black magic of fathers, that they hold us even when we are far away with the iron grip of the ideas with which they mould their children's minds.

I believed that by putting enough miles between me and my father, I could have a life of my own, even if at the cost of Jack's friendship. It was not so, and I found I had been butchering the latter (butchering \*us\*) without gaining the former. Without Jack, I find I haven't a life at all.

The only hope I can ever have of being myself (whoever "myself" may be) is a gift only you, my love, my Jack, can give me. I also know that it is too late. My wounds are deadly, and I don't know that they can be healed. If you can't, if your warm heart and your cool hands won't, who will?

But if you only stay with me, I'll die happy. I'm too greedy for you, or too frightened of dying alone, to let you go. At times I make myself strong enough to try and send you away, before you become too soiled with this decaying mass that is my heart. But you always stand fast, and I lose my courage in the face of yours.

You are my drug.

Even now the warmth of your body behind me is such a comfort that I could cry. To prevent myself, I move my hand up across my chest, as though rearranging myself in sleep. I reach the twin scars along my throat. My fingers feel chilled on the pulse of the artery.

I hear your breath catching again.

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Notes:

1. The timeline is tentative, but it should be holding. "The Final Problem" is dated by Conan Doyle at 1891. "The Importance of Being Ernest" had its premiere on February 14th, 1895. This allows for a 20-something Jack to be present at the premiere of "Ernest". Btw, it also makes Holmes nine months and ten days the older than Wilde.

2. I should be blushing as I confess that Jack's musings about his Med School years contain almost literally a line from the lyrics of "Piemontesina bella". I found out after I'd written them. I apologize.

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