

Stealing Beauty

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One

Sherlock Holmes was ill. Suffering from influenza pretty much sucked. He was on his own in the flat he shared with John Watson. John had gone on holiday just the day before Sherlock developed a fever. Now Sherlock lay in bed bored to death. Due to the fever his brain worked far slower than he was used to. Yet another thing darkening his mood. And there was nobody he could rant to about it. John was on vacation with his bride-to-be, Mycroft he disliked too much to inform about his sickness, Lestrade was probably busy sitting behind his desk doing nothing. And to be honest Sherlock really was in no mood for a stupid person. That only left one human being: Molly Hooper. She was not as stupid as most people. Moreover, she was quite smart, at least compared to everyone else in Sherlock's environment.

Knowing Molly had a soft spot for him he decided to text her. Due to the fever clouding his brain the text message was short, but urgent:

'Molly, I need you. My place. Now. - SH'

It was her day off and Molly Hooper, pathologist at St. Bart's, had just left the bathroom, where she had spent an hour and a half soaking her skin in her bathtub, reading some romantic novel. After she had dressed she looked at her phone as to check whether there were any calls she had missed. Slightly surprised, she found a message from HIM. Sherlock Holmes. The man she had fallen for head over heels years ago. He wanted her to come to his place, which was unusual. Normally he just came by the morgue whenever he needed something from her which was mostly dead bodies or parts of them for his experiments. Molly was not sure whether she wanted to know what sort of experiments these were. Inwardly she pitied John Watson a bit for sharing a flat with a man like Sherlock. He must drive any sane person crazy with his erratic behaviour, his rudeness and his need to always demonstrate his intellectual superiority. Nonetheless Molly was deeply and utterly in love with Sherlock. And of course she would go to his place. Not only because she was concerned about him, but also because she was quite curious why Sherlock needed her.

Molly just started to text back when her phone vibrated. Another message.

'Now, Molly!- SH'

That was all he had typed. She groaned, but grabbed her purse, red coat and her keys. Only a few minutes later she was ready to leave, still wondering what was so urgent

that Sherlock would pester her instead of John Watson, who usually got dragged along whenever the consulting detective was on a case.

While crossing the street Molly sent a message herself.

'On my way, will be there in 15 minutes.'

That was if she made it to the tube station in time. Since it was November it got dark quite early. Although it was barely five pm, the sun had started to set already. Under normal circumstances darkness would not have been a problem at all, but in order to get to the tube Molly was forced to walk through a park, which was near the house she lived in and separated her from public transport. There was hardly any surveillance in this park, nor street lamps. Molly could think of a lot of activities she liked better than walking through a almost dark park in the early evening. Suddenly shuddering the pathologist wrapped her red cardigan tighter around her body. She usually did not suffer from paranoia, but not long ago she had dated this dangerous guy, James Moriarty. The mere thought of him sent shivers down her spine. She got goosebumps and her pace quickened as she walked down an alley, which was bordered by tall sycamores.

Lost in thought she nearly jumped out of her skin as someone stepped right in front of her. At first she was so surprised, shocked even, that she did not make a sound. Her heart beat fast inside her chest while her breath caught in her throat. After she had recovered a bit she recognised the person in front of her. It was him. Moriarty. His eyes glittered in the beginning darkness of the night. A smile played around his lips. As he looked her up and down Molly felt her stomach churn with nausea. "Did you miss me, baby girl?" he asked, his voice low and soft like velvet.

Instinctively Molly backed away a few steps, reaching for her mobile phone, which she had put in the pocket of her coat in case Sherlock sent her another text, demanding her to hurry or something similar. She certainly had not expected to be delayed by James Moriarty. Actually she had thought that he would be gone, out of her life for good. She remembered Sherlock warning her about him. And that he had stated Moriarty was gay, which Molly had fought about with said man. He had then disappeared, had not reacted to the shout-outs on her blog. At first she had been terribly disappointed. In men, in the world in general. Oh, and she had been angry with Sherlock for ruining something that had started out so surprisingly well. But actually his interference had been a blessing in disguise. Moriarty was a sick and twisted person, prone to violence and murder. What made him even more dangerous was his skill to hide who he truly was until it was too late. Molly had not been the first to be taken in by Moriarty and she would not be the last.

"I take this as a No then." Moriarty stated flatly. There was a slight hint of disappointment in his voice, which irritated Molly. Looking around if there was anyone near in case she needed help dealing with the situation she realised that they were all alone. She was out on a limb. In a dark park. Nobody would hear her scream, nobody would come to her rescue. Hastily Molly stepped back some more. This time Moriarty followed her. Panic exploded inside her brain, she felt the familiar sting of tears in the corners of her eyes.

'No, don't cry!' she scolded herself, 'Don't be stupid, just run away, kick him, scream at him. Just do something!'

"That disappoints me quite a bit, baby girl. Because you know what? I did miss you. A lot actually."

His voice had been still low, still had that seductive coaxing tone to it. Once it had made Molly shiver with delight, tonight dread was all she felt. She felt a lump in her throat. Although she had encouraged herself mentally to run away she did not. It was as if she was rooted to the spot. All she could do was stare at Moriarty, hoping he would leave her alone. But she knew better than this. Chasing her would either make him angry-and nobody in their right mind would want to mess with Moriarty- or he would enjoy the chase. At last it would sweeten his triumph over her.

"I don't remember you being so uncommunicative."

As if frustrated by her silence Moriarty ran his hand through his dark hair, shaking his head simultaneously. Molly still could not move. But she had apparently found her tongue, or at least remembered how to use it.

"What do you want from me? I thought I was only a means to an end so you could get closer to Sherlock." Molly snapped, wondering where the hell she had mustered that much courage to use such a tone with Jim Moriarty.

He arched an eyebrow, but surprisingly a smile appeared on his face, replacing the frustrated look that previously had dominated it. Very slowly Moriarty shook his head again.

"Ah... you misjudge your own worth so very much, baby girl."

Molly sure did not like his smile, his words even less. She hated to admit it, but she was scared. Whatever Moriarty was up to was no good. The lump in her throat grew bigger. Her hand still clutched the mobile phone in the pocket of her coat. Dammit, she did not know what to do. Was there anything at all she could do? After all Moriarty was a criminal mastermind and she was a pathologist. And she sucked at self-defence, whether the physical or the verbal kind.

"What do you want?" Molly repeated, her voice clipped. It occurred to her that by now she had missed at least two tubes. Sherlock surely was wondering why it took her so long to come find him. For a moment she considered typing a text message blind and send it. Maybe Sherlock could rescue her. When it came to Jim Moriarty Molly was damn sure that Sherlock Holmes was the only person in the entire universe and beyond it who would be able to save her.

Moriarty was now directly in front of her. When she tried to move further back, she hit one of the sycamores with her backside. He had trapped her. Maybe that was what had brought the smug look onto the consulting criminal's face.

"Don't you know that, baby girl?" he asked, his voice back to coaxing. He had stretched out one arm, cornering her against the tree while his other hand brushed over Molly's cheek lightly. Weeks ago that touch would have made her happy, would have made her crave for more. Now that she knew who Moriarty was and what he did for a living she felt very much like throwing up then and there. Which she did not, luckily.

"N-no." Molly breathed, intimidated by being so close to him. For a moment she closed her eyes and prayed to God, even though she was not the religious type. But Moriarty was dangerous and that he had taken an interest in her again scared the hell

out of her.

“Well...”

Before Moriarty could add more Molly's phone went off, playing the Glee opening. She let out a yelp in surprise but her opponent's facial expression had darkened. With a swift movement he retrieved the phone from her coat. The sudden anger written on his face gave Molly a clue concerning who was calling her. Moriarty answered the call provocatively slow.

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Back in 221b Baker Street Sherlock Holmes had just overcome his dislike for making phone calls. Molly was late thirty minutes without any excuse. Non- typical behaviour. Sherlock would not have bothered, but he was sick and bored and he knew that Molly would have informed him about her delay had there been mundane reasons. Since she had no contacted him Sherlock concluded that something was the matter. So he decided he would call her instead of pestering her with another text. Apart from that it was possible that Molly was in no fit state to either text back or actually answer the call. Nonetheless Sherlock gave it a try. The sudden rush of relief he had felt when someone unhooked the call irritated him and was shattered into pieces the next second. He realized he had not barked 'Where are you?' at Molly. It was Jim Moriarty.